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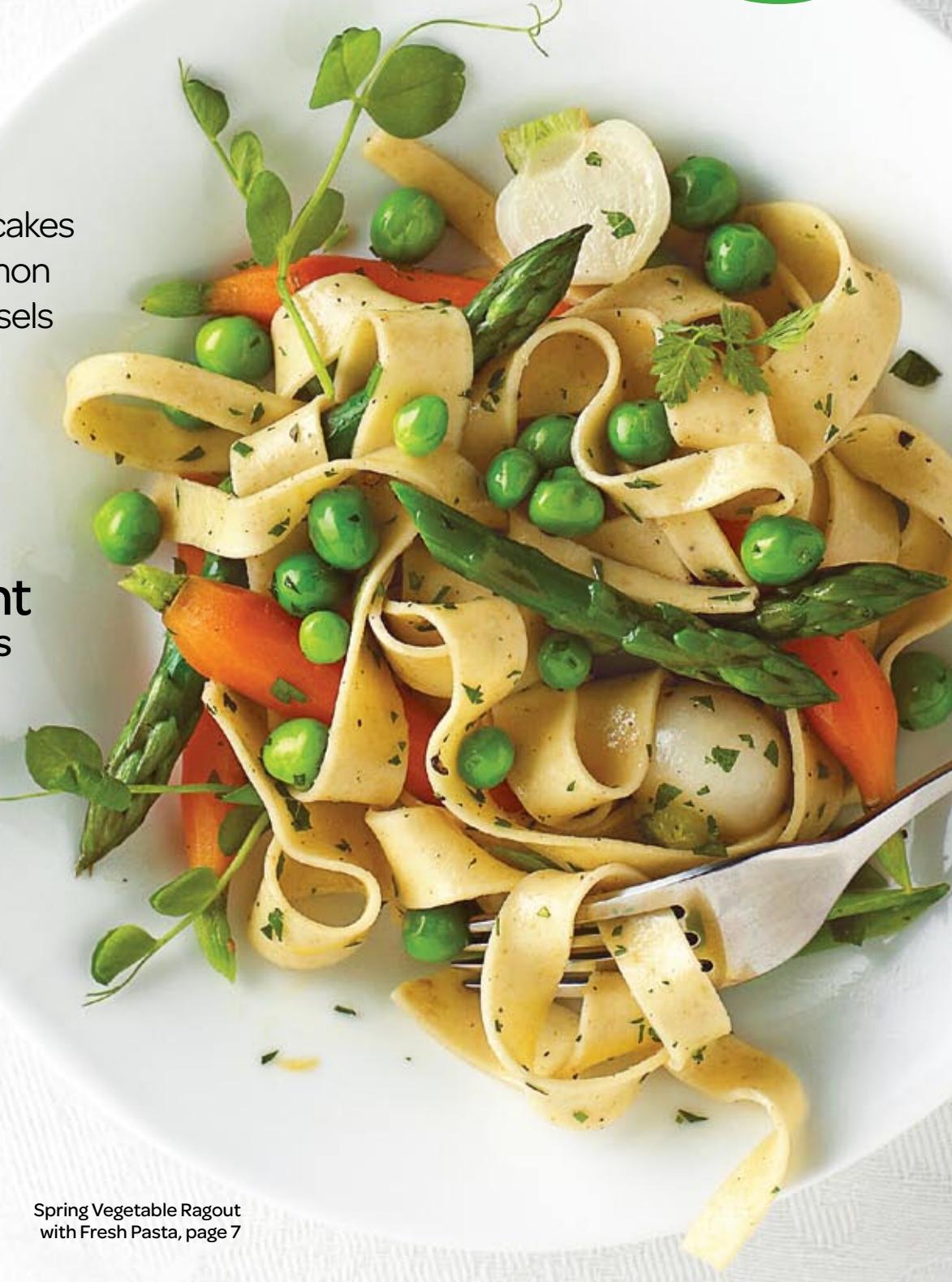
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Spring Vegetable Ragout  
with Fresh Pasta, page 7





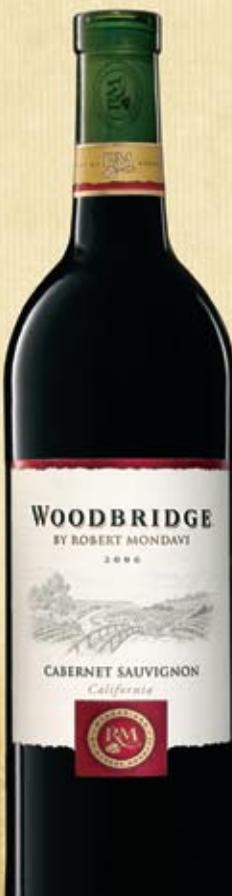
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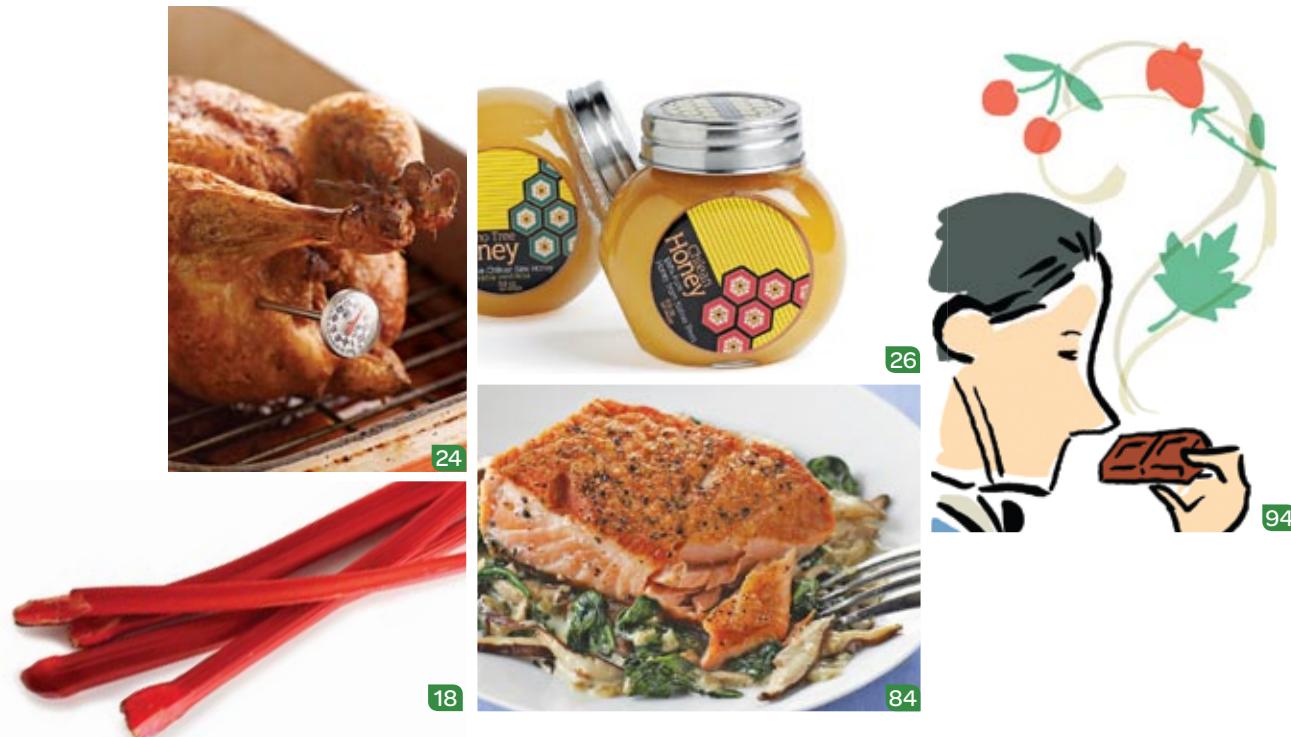
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**A night to remember**

Clockwise, from left: Photographer Scott Phillips and contributing editor Abby Dodge; publisher Maria Taylor; art director Don Morris and photographer Frances Janisch; contributors (from left) Raquel Pelzel, Melissa Feldman, Ed Schoenfeld, Ellie Krieger, and me; staffers Jen Armentrout, Allison Kreitler, and Sharon Anderson.

## Party People

THE MOST ENTHUSIASTIC COOKS are irrepressible in their efforts to find reasons to cook; they think even the most minor occasion (your half-birthday, the long-awaited ripening of a favorite tomato) is a fine excuse to make a cake or buy lobster or slow-smoke the better part of a pig. These are some of my favorite people: They're the best cooks I know, and they make occasions of days that might otherwise pass unnoticed.

We recently made an occasion of a couple of milestones at *Fine Cooking*: our fifteenth anniversary and the redesign of the February/March 2009 issue. Despite some wintry weather, we slipped away from the office early and joined contributors and friends at a restaurant on New York's Lower East Side (party photos above). It was, of course, a good excuse to eat well, but it was also a chance to thank everyone who had helped make those accomplishments possible.

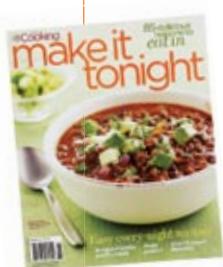
There are any number of occasions to celebrate over the next couple of months—Easter, Passover, Mother's Day, and Memorial Day among them. Surely there are also birthdays, anniversaries, and other days special to you that might be made all the more special if you cooked. This issue is packed with ideas for doing just that, including our cover recipe (opposite), itself a celebration of the new season. Happy (fill in the blank anyway you like).

**Laurie Buckle, editor**  
fc@taunton.com

## more fine cooking

**Web** In case you haven't paid a visit yet, [finecooking.com](http://finecooking.com) has a new look, new blogs, an incredibly useful ingredient guide, and a tool that takes our "Create Your Own Recipe" idea to the next level.

**Books** Fans of the *Fresh* special issues will want our new book of the same name. It's got 350 delicious seasonal recipes.



**Special Issues** Keep an eye out for our latest title, *Make It Tonight*, packed with 85 easy and tasty reasons to eat in. In addition, *Fine Cooking* contributing editor and best-selling cookbook author Ellie Krieger shares her simple recipes for healthy cooking from a well-stocked pantry in *Eat Smart with Ellie Krieger*.

**COVER RECIPE**

## spring vegetable ragout with fresh pasta

Serves 4

- Kosher salt**
- ¾ lb. fresh pasta sheets**
- 1 small clove garlic, minced**
- Freshly ground black pepper**
- 3 cups mixed spring vegetables (such as medium-thick asparagus, baby carrots, baby turnips, spring onions, and sugar snap peas), trimmed and cut into 1- to 3-inch long by ½- to ¾-inch-wide pieces**
- ½ cup shelled peas or peeled fava beans (see note)**
- ½ cup loosely packed pea shoots or watercress sprigs; more for garnish**
- ¼ cup loosely packed chopped mixed fresh herbs, such as basil, chervil, mint, parsley, and/or tarragon; more for garnish**
- 4 Tbs. cold unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch pieces**
- 1½ tsp. freshly grated lemon zest**
- Freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano for garnish (optional)**

**Bring a large pot** of well-salted water to a boil. With a pizza cutter or chef's knife, cut the pasta sheets into rustic strips about ½ inch wide.

**In a 10- to 11-inch straight-sided sauté pan**, bring 2½ cups water, the garlic, 1 tsp. salt, and ¼ tsp. pepper to a simmer over high heat. Add the mixed vegetables and simmer briskly, adjusting the heat as necessary, until just crisp-tender, 3 to 4 minutes. With a slotted spoon, transfer to a large plate. If using peas, simmer them until barely tender, about 2 minutes, and transfer to the plate with the slotted spoon. (If using favas, skip this step.) Raise the heat to high and boil the liquid until reduced to 1 cup, 3 to 4 minutes.

**Meanwhile**, cook the pasta in the boiling water until barely al dente, 2 to 4 minutes. Drain.

**Add the cooked pasta**, vegetables, favas (if using), pea shoots or watercress, herbs, butter, and lemon zest to the broth. Toss over medium-high heat until the butter is melted, about 1 minute.

**Season to taste** with salt and pepper. Serve garnished with pea shoots or watercress, fresh herbs, and Parmigiano (if using).

**Note:** To peel fava beans, shuck them and cook them in boiling salted water until tender, 1 to 2 minutes, then rinse them with cold water and peel off the skin.

—Allison Ehri Kreitler

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THE RESPONSE to our redesign issue (*Fine Cooking* #97, Feb/Mar 2009) was both big and opinionated, so we thought we'd share with you the good, the bad, and the constructive.

### PROS...

My new issue of *Fine Cooking* came today and I heard my wife say, Wow, look at this. She was staring at the gorgeous photo on the front cover. What a beautiful, well-organized layout full of so many things I want to cook. Then I went back and read your letter, explaining the new design. I can't imagine how much work it took to reformat *Fine Cooking*. I have been a reader for a long time, and this is a winner.

—Jim Blackman,  
Middleton, Idaho

I love your magazine. It caters to every level of expertise; your explanations of techniques make it possible for anyone to get a great result. My two energetic boys love to cook and bake, and, together, we just successfully made the croissants from the latest issue. This magazine makes recipes from the cutting edge of cuisine seem easy. Keep up the exceptional work and thanks for a wonderful magazine. I can't wait to see what the next issue holds.

—Kathryn, Adam, and Ryan Hull,  
Nova Scotia, Canada

We received issue #97 today, and we were wowed by it. We love the new font on the cover and the new tag line. The photography inside is terrific. In fact, on page 72, I tried brushing the crumbs of carrot cake off the page. We also like the grouping of several recipes around one ingredient. The

new icons are great. It was interesting to read about the team you assembled to pull this new look together. You're off to a good start; keep it up.

—Barbara Peckenpaugh,  
via email

I love, love, love the new look of *Fine Cooking*, and as a longtime subscriber, I have to say that the Feb/Mar issue is one of the best. I wanted to make everything in it and have set out to do so. The slow-roasted pork has been cooking all day, and my home smells wonderful. Thank you.

—Holly Wenzl, via email

I've subscribed to *Fine Cooking* for a number of years and have given gift subscriptions to many family members and friends. As a chef, I've also used it as a teaching tool for some of my young apprentices. I love the new look. Your publication is simply excellent. It is fresh, clean, updated, timely, easy to navigate, informative, and, most of all, fun to read.

—Margot J. Bodchon,  
British Columbia, Canada

I simply want to congratulate you for such a great magazine and Web site. The Feb/Mar issue has answered so many questions for me, including how to make soups without recipes and the difference between baking flours. The Web site was fast, and I loved the video on how to slice and dice onions. The new format is terrific.

—Fabienne Melkanoff, via email

### CONS...

The Feb/Mar issue of *Fine Cooking* arrived and unfortunately, I was quite disappointed in the new format. The photos are great, but the layouts and recipes were very difficult to follow. What I liked best about *Fine Cooking* was the variety of recipes and simple directions, not to mention the fact that the results were always perfect. The magazine gave me the confidence to cook well, since the recipes were clear and concise. The new format makes it difficult to organize the ingredients and understand the process.

—Roswitha Linde,  
Wolcott, Vermont

I wanted to let you know that I am not a fan of the new format. In my opinion you have "dumbed down" the magazine with bigger pictures, less writing, and less of the content that I used to look forward to seeing.

—Stuart Miller, via email

When my Feb/Mar issue arrived I immediately loved the new look. But now that I'm reading the magazine, I'm wondering: Where are the words? I've learned a lot from the article introductions, but now most of them have been shortened to just a sentence or two. I hope that in the future you can balance the cool graphic design with a little more text.

—Elana Gravitz, Minneapolis

I loved the magazine as it was. The current issue doesn't have the clean, welcoming look and feel of former issues. Somehow, it seems disjointed. The paper feels flimsier, and it seems like there aren't as many nice photos, one of the hallmarks of the magazine. I used to look forward to sitting down with a new issue and thumbing through it before I read the editorial. This time, I found myself thinking, What's wrong with this issue?

—Teresa Sanofsky, via email

### THE WINNER

#### Reader tip: Planing butter

When preparing breakfast for my family I often forget to take the butter out of the refrigerator to soften. In a pinch, I use a cheese plane to skim thin slices off the stick of butter. They melt instantly when applied to hot toast, bagels, or English muffins.

—Kate Thomas, Lynnfield, Massachusetts

#### Write a winning tip

We want to hear from you. Give us your best tip and we'll reward you with a kitchen prize. Kate is the winner of a 20x36-inch GelPro mat.

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San Francisco illustrator **Ward Schumaker** (Food for Thought, page 94) counts *The New York Times* and *Le Figaro* among his clients. His work has been exhibited at Shanghai's Stir Gallery and UC Berkeley's Townsend Center.

- **The last thing I ate was...** a rice cake with peanut butter.
- **My drink of choice is...** my wife's sun lemonade. It's like sun tea but with lemon and lime juice and crushed strawberries.
- **My guilty food pleasure is...** pie for breakfast. But without whipped cream; I was raised Protestant, after all.



**Lauren Chattman** ("Sandwiches," page 62) has written nine cookbooks, including *Panini Express: 70 Delicious Recipes, Hot off the Press*, with Daniel Leader, and *Dessert Express*. Her next book, *Cake Keeper Cakes*, comes out this fall.

- **I am currently obsessed with...** black licorice.
- **My least favorite food is...** cooked leafy greens. I know I should eat my veggies, but...
- **My culinary icon is...** Sheila Lukins.



One of only three people in the world who can claim both the master sommelier and master of wine titles, **Doug Frost** ("Riesling," page 32) is also an author and lecturer on wine, beer, and spirits. He is the beverage columnist for the *Kansas City Star* and has written for numerous publications, including the *San Francisco Chronicle* and *Santé*. Frost has also written two books, *On Wine* and *Uncorking Wine*.

- **The last thing I cooked was...** fresh salsa with heirloom peppers, onions, lime, cilantro. Ain't no tomato in my salsa.
- **I'm currently obsessed with...** mezcal.
- **My least favorite food is...** Brussels sprouts, unless they're smothered in butter and bacon.



**Adam Kaye** ("Sausage," page 68) is chef and kitchen director at Blue Hill at Stone Barns in Pocantico Hills, New York, where he also heads up the charcuterie program. He's cooked for more than 10 years in top restaurant kitchens, including Vidalia in Washington, DC, and Chanterelle in New York City.

- **Milk or dark chocolate...** I just like chocolate. Do I really have to choose?
- **The last thing I ate was...** curried chicken salad at our staff meal.
- **My guilty food pleasure is...** take-out General Tso's chicken.



The former chef-owner of Square One restaurant in San Francisco, **Joyce Goldstein** ("Brisket," page 56) is a frequent contributor to national magazines and newspapers and writes a monthly column for *Sommelier Journal* on pairing food and wine. Her most recent book is *Mediterranean Fresh: A Compendium of One-Plate Salad Meals and Mix-and-Match Dressings*, and her next book, coming out this spring, is called *Tapas, Sensational Small Plates from Spain*.

- **The last thing I cooked was...** a green lentil salad with beets and chopped hard-boiled eggs.
- **My drink of choice is...** coffee. My espresso machine is broken right now, and it's very frustrating.
- **The best part of my job is...** research. I love tracking down the origin of a dish.



Photographer **Frances Janisch** ("Brunch," page 34) shoots food for numerous American magazines (*More* and *House Beautiful* among them), and some British and Australian ones, too. Born in South Africa, she lives with her husband and daughter in New York City.

- **My least favorite food is...** licorice.
- **The last thing I cooked was...** pasta with avocado and peas for my daughter.
- **My guilty-food pleasure is...** Marmite on hot buttered toast.

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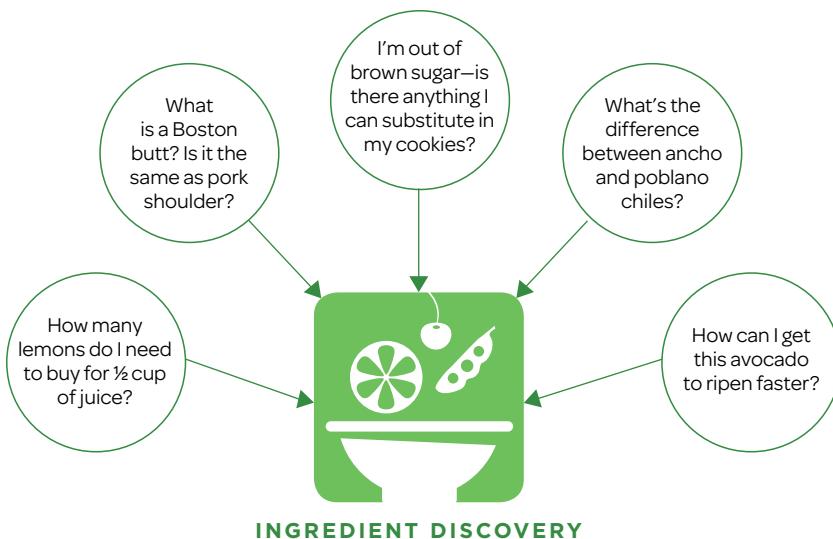
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# Questions of the Day

A cook's favorite question—What's for dinner?—often leads to even more questions. For answers, go to [FineCooking.com](http://FineCooking.com)'s Ingredient Discovery.



## CooksClub

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Are pie crusts your undoing? This month, enter our members-only **What Can't You Cook?** contest: Tell us what dish or technique you struggle to master, and win a personal, hands-on cooking class with an expert on that topic.

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# MARKETPLACE

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TRY THIS

## Lemongrass

This citrusy plant plays a starring role in many Southeast-Asian cuisines, adding its unique flavor to everything from curries to cold drinks. Not long ago, it was nearly impossible to find, except in Asian markets. But these days, lemongrass is going mainstream, making its way into the produce section of your supermarket. Here's why you should give it a try.

*Continued on page 16*



**TRY THIS****LEMONGRASS****What it is**

Evergreen in warm climates, lemongrass is a sharp-bladed, perennial, blue-green grass that grows in 3- to 6-foot-tall cascading clumps. In addition to its uses in the kitchen, it's valued medicinally as a remedy for a wide range of ailments, from stomach troubles and fever to depression.

**Why we love it**

In a word: fragrance. The ethereal aroma of lemongrass—resembling tropical flowers, ginger, and all things citrus—is like a delicate perfume for food. Lemongrass pairs well with just about anything, though it's particularly good with seafood, chicken, and pork. It also has an affinity for coconut milk. Its most iconic use is in Thai curry pastes, where it's puréed with chiles, shallots, ginger, garlic,

and spices to become an aromatic flavor base for all types of curries.

**How to buy and store it**

Much of lemongrass's flavor is concentrated in its lower, cane-like stalks, which is why most markets sell them already trimmed of their leafy tops, leaving just a few short, spiky blades still attached. Look for firm, pale-green stalks with fat, bulbous bottoms and reasonably fresh-looking tops (they may be a little dry but shouldn't be desiccated or yellowed). To store, wrap in plastic and refrigerate for two to three weeks, or freeze for up to six months.

**How to cook it**

There are two main ways to cook with lemongrass, and each determines how you handle it. To **infuse teas, broths, soups, and**

**braising liquids**, trim off the spiky tops and the bases, crush the stalks with the side of a knife to release their aromatic oils, and then cut them into 1- or 2-inch pieces. Remove the pieces before eating (they tend to be woody) or eat around them, as in the recipe below.

To use lemongrass in **marinades, stir-fries, salads, spice rubs, and curry pastes**, trim the top and base of the stalks—you want to use only the bottom 4 inches or so. Then peel off any dry or tough outer layers before finely chopping or mincing. Lemongrass holds up to long cooking and gains intensity the longer it's cooked. If you'd like a strong lemongrass flavor, add minced lemongrass at the start of cooking, browning it along with the other aromatics. For a lighter, fresher lemongrass flavor, add it near the end of cooking.

—Jennifer Armentrout



Get the skinny on hundreds of ingredients at [FineCooking.com/ingredients](http://FineCooking.com/ingredients).

**spicy steamed mussels with lemongrass, chile, and basil**

Serves 4

- 1 Tbs. vegetable oil
  - 2 shallots, thinly sliced into rounds ( $\frac{1}{4}$  cup)
  - 1 cup lower-salt chicken broth
  - 3 stalks lemongrass, trimmed, cut into 2-inch pieces, and lightly smashed ( $\frac{3}{4}$  cup)
  - 3  $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch-thick slices fresh ginger
  - Zest of  $\frac{1}{2}$  lime, peeled off in strips with a vegetable peeler (about 5 strips)
  - 2 lb. mussels, scrubbed and debearded
  - 1 red serrano (or other small hot red chile), sliced into thin rounds
  - $\frac{1}{2}$  cup chopped fresh basil
- Asian chili sauce, such as Sriracha (optional)

**Heat the oil** in a large straight-sided sauté pan or pot over medium heat. Add the shallots and cook, stirring often, until browned, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the broth, lemongrass, ginger, lime zest, and 1 cup water. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat and then reduce to medium low; cover and simmer for 10 minutes.

**Raise the heat** to medium high and add the mussels and chile. Cover and simmer until the mussels open, 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer the mussels to serving bowls, discarding any that haven't opened. Add the basil to the broth and simmer for 1 minute. Add chili sauce to taste, if using. Ladle the broth over the mussels. Don't eat the lemongrass or the ginger.



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## Ingredients:

- 2 pounds medium plum tomatoes (10-12), halved lengthwise
- 1/2 cup olive oil, divided
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tbsp. McCormick® Gourmet Collection™ Italian Seasoning
- 1/2 tsp. McCormick® Gourmet Collection™ Crushed Red Pepper
- 1/2 tsp. McCormick® Gourmet Collection™ Sicilian Sea Salt
- 1/4 tsp. McCormick® Gourmet Collection™ Coarse Grind Black Pepper
- 8 ounces pasta, such as spaghetti

## Directions:

PLACE tomato halves, cut-sides up, in foil-lined 15"x10"x1" pan sprayed with no stick cooking spray. Mix 1/4 cup oil, garlic and seasonings in small bowl. Spoon over tomatoes. Drizzle with 2 tablespoons of the remaining oil.

ROAST in preheated 400°F oven 45 to 60 minutes until tomatoes are soft and browned on top.

PREPARE pasta as directed on package. Drain well. Place 1/2 of the roasted tomatoes and remaining 2 tablespoons oil in large bowl. Coarsely mash tomatoes. Add pasta and remaining tomatoes; toss to mix well. Sprinkle with shredded Parmesan cheese and additional crushed red pepper, if desired.



## WHAT WE'RE COOKING NOW

# Asparagus, Arugula, and Rhubarb

Nine ways to use three seasonal ingredients we can't get enough of.  
*Fine Cooking* editors share some delicious ideas.

## Asparagus

**Allison Ehri Kreitler:** I like to steam asparagus, then shave the stalks in fettuccine-like strips with a vegetable peeler, reserving the tips. I toss the asparagus "fettuccine" and tips with real fettuccine and a creamy sauce flavored with lemon zest and tarragon.



**Rebecca Freedman:** For a tasty salad, I start off by roasting some asparagus and cherry tomatoes in a hot oven until tender. Then I combine them with baby greens, goat cheese, toasted nuts, and a simple balsamic vinaigrette.



**Jennifer Armentrout:** My favorite way to prepare asparagus is to roast them in a hot oven and drizzle them with *takliah*, an easy-to-make Egyptian condiment. To make *takliah*, gently heat chopped garlic in olive oil until it begins to turn golden. Add a little ground coriander, let it heat briefly, and then pour the *takliah* into a small heatproof bowl. Drizzle it, along with a little lemon juice, over the roasted asparagus.

## Arugula



**Laura Giannatempo:** I love to make a simple salad of baby arugula tossed with a lemony vinaigrette. I top it with thin shavings of Parmigiano-Reggiano and serve it over slices of bresaola for a quick and tasty weeknight meal.



**Melissa Pellegrino:** One of my favorite late-spring dishes is grilled lamb burgers topped with arugula, grilled red onion, and feta slices, accompanied by a rosemary aioli.



**Lisa Waddle:** For a different kind of pesto, blend three parts arugula to one part spinach, a couple of garlic cloves, lemon juice, and toasted walnuts in a food processor. With the processor running, drizzle in extra-virgin olive oil and season with salt and pepper. It's a nice change from basil pesto on pasta or spread on crostini.



## Rhubarb



**Denise Mickelsen:** What could be easier than a rhubarb fool? Cut 4 large rhubarb stalks into chunks and put them in a large saucepan. Add

1 packed cup light brown sugar, about  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup water, and a generous squeeze of lemon juice. Cook over medium heat, stirring, until the rhubarb is broken down and the mixture has thickened a little. Add more sugar or lemon juice to taste, then chill completely. Gently fold into cold whipped cream and serve in chilled wine glasses or small glass bowls.



**Allison Ehri Kreitler:** Try making a savory compote by sautéing chopped shallots in butter and then adding sliced rhubarb, red wine, sugar, black pepper, and a little star anise. Simmer until very soft, breaking it up with a wooden spoon. Add more sliced rhubarb and simmer until just barely tender to provide crunch. Serve with roasted or grilled meats.



**Lisa Waddle:** Make a rustic crumble by mixing  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. chopped rhubarb with  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sugar, orange zest, and nutmeg. Pour it into a pie dish, then stir together 1 cup flour,  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup dark brown sugar,  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup oatmeal, and about 6 Tbs. canola oil and spread it over the rhubarb mixture. Bake the crumble at 375°F until the rhubarb is tender and bubbling.

## PRESERVING THE SEASON

# Mushrooms

BEFORE SPRING HAS REALLY SPRUNG, it can feel like there isn't much in season. That's why we love mushrooms. From cremini and shiitake to portobellos and hens of the woods, cultivated mushrooms are often one of the few items in stores that haven't been flown in from across the globe. So buy a bunch and enjoy them for weeks to come by preserving them in olive oil.

These mushrooms get lots of flavor from a quick sear, although they keep a nice, chewy texture because they're not cooked all the way through. The wine-and-vinegar marinade infuses them with even more flavor and provides an acidic balance to the rich olive oil. Tastier and meatier than your average store-bought jarred mushrooms, these are delicious on crostini, over steak, pork, or chicken, and as a pita topping or omelet filling.

## twice-marinated mushrooms

This recipe works well with a variety of mushrooms. The cooking time, however, varies slightly depending on the type you use (see sidebar below). You can marinate each mushroom variety separately, or if you want to marinate a mix of mushrooms, cook them separately and then marinate them together.

**Yields about 2 cups**

- 1½ cups dry white wine
- ½ cup white wine vinegar
- 3 medium cloves garlic, crushed
- 2 1x4-inch strips lemon zest, white pith removed
- 1 4-inch sprig rosemary
- 2 tsp. kosher salt
- ½ tsp. juniper berries (about 14), lightly crushed
- ½ tsp. fennel seed, lightly chopped
- ¼ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
- ¼ tsp. coarsely ground black pepper
- ¾ cup extra-virgin olive oil (approximately)
- 1 lb. mushrooms, trimmed (see below)

**Mix the wine**, vinegar, garlic, lemon zest, rosemary, salt, juniper berries, fennel seed, red pepper flakes, and black pepper to make a marinade.

**Heat 3 Tbs.** of the olive oil in a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until very hot. Add the mushrooms and cook, stirring once or twice, until golden brown on one or two sides, 1½ to 4 minutes, depending on the type of mushroom—they should not be cooked all the way through. Spread on a plate to cool.

**Add the marinade** to the skillet. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat, and simmer for 5 minutes to infuse the flavors. Put the mushrooms and marinade in a heatproof container, such as a 1-quart Pyrex measuring cup. Let cool to room temperature, cover, and refrigerate overnight.

**Drain the mushrooms**, reserving the garlic and discarding the marinade and most of the aromatics (it's OK if some of the aromatics stick to the mushrooms). Pack the mushrooms and garlic into a pint jar with lid (or other sealable container). Add enough of the remaining oil to cover, and refrigerate at least overnight and up to 1 month.

—Allison Ehri Kreitler

## Mushroom prep

Each type of mushroom requires slightly different trimming. Here's how to prepare some of our favorites:

**Cremini** Halve if large; cook 2 to 3 minutes.

**Portobello** Remove stem and gills and cut into ½-inch-thick slices; cook 1½ to 2 minutes.

**Shiitake** Remove stems and leave whole; cook 1½ to 2 minutes.

**Oyster** If large, separate lobes from bunches; if small, leave in little bunches ½ to ¾ inch thick; cook 1½ to 2 minutes.

**Maitake/Hen of the woods** Separate into little bunches with ½- to ¾-inch-thick stems; cook about 2 minutes.

**Trumpet royale** Leave whole or in little clumps if small; cut lengthwise into halves or thirds if large. The stems should be ½ to ¾ inch thick. Cook about 4 minutes.

**BIG BUY COOKING**

# Sun-Dried Tomatoes

Making the most of a favorite food find from a warehouse store.  
BY ALLISON EHRI KREITLER

SO YOU COULDN'T RESIST buying that jar of sun-dried tomatoes—but now that you're home, what are you going to do with two pounds of them? Not to worry. With these tasty recipes—a punchy salad dressing, stuffed chicken breasts, and a creamy pasta sauce with a peppery kick—you'll have no problem using them up. That big jar will be empty before you can say "delicious."



## The Buy

**What:** Sun Dried Tomatoes in 100% pure olive oil and herbs.

**How much:** Two-pound jar.

**How to store:** Refrigerate in their jar covered in their oil. They will keep for up to a month. To use the tomatoes, scrape them on the rim of the jar to remove some of the stuck-on cold oil. But don't bother to wipe them; the extra oil adds flavor.

## sun-dried tomato and feta vinaigrette

Not only is this dressing great on salads, but it's also delicious on boiled peeled baby potatoes. The dressing keeps for up to 1 week in the refrigerator.

**Yields about 1½ cups**

- ½ cup drained oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes, coarsely chopped, plus ¼ cup oil from the jar
- ¼ cup plus 2 Tbs. sherry vinegar
- 1 small shallot, coarsely chopped (about 3 Tbs.)
- 1 Tbs. loosely packed chopped fresh oregano
- ¼ tsp. sweet pimentón (smoked paprika)
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup crumbled feta cheese

**Put the tomatoes**, vinegar, shallot, oregano, pimentón, 1 tsp. salt, ¼ tsp. pepper, and 2 Tbs. water in a blender and blend to combine (don't worry if it doesn't purée; it will when you add the oil). With the blender running, pour the olive oil and the tomato oil in a slow steady stream through the feed hole in the blender's lid. Transfer to a bowl or jar and stir in the feta. Season to taste with salt and pepper.





## rigatoni with sun-dried tomato and fennel sauce

Serves 4

- Kosher salt
- 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 cup chopped fennel (about  $\frac{1}{2}$  medium bulb)
- 2 medium cloves garlic, very coarsely chopped
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 cup lower-salt chicken broth
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup drained oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes, very coarsely chopped
- $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 Tbs. Pernod (optional)
- 1 lb. dried rigatoni

**Bring a large pot** of well-salted water to a boil.

**Meanwhile, heat the olive oil** in a 10- to 11-inch straight-sided sauté pan over medium heat. Add the fennel and garlic and cook, stirring occasionally, until the fennel starts to soften and brown, about 5 minutes. Stir in 1 cup water and the cream, chicken broth, sun-dried tomatoes, pepper flakes, and 1 tsp. salt. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat, and simmer briskly, uncovered, until the tomatoes are plump and soft, about 15 minutes.

**Remove from the heat** and stir in the Pernod, if using. Let cool slightly and then purée in a blender until smooth. Wipe out the skillet, return the sauce to the skillet, return the sauce to the skillet, season to taste with salt, and keep hot.

**Cook the rigatoni** until just barely al dente, 1 to 2 minutes less than package instructions. Drain well and return to the pot. Add the sauce and toss over medium-low heat for a minute or two so the pasta finishes cooking and absorbs some of the sauce.

## chicken breasts stuffed with sun-dried tomatoes and green olives

Serves 4

- Pinch saffron (about 15 threads)
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 2½ tsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1½ tsp. mild honey, such as clover
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. freshly grated lemon zest
- $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 large clove garlic, crushed and peeled
- Kosher salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup drained oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes, very coarsely chopped
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup pitted green olives, such as manzanilla
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup loosely packed fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves, coarsely chopped
- 4 split skin-on bone-in chicken breasts (3 to 3½ lb.)
- Freshly ground black pepper

**Position a rack** in the middle of the oven and heat the oven to 425°F. **Soak the saffron** in 2 tsp. hot water for 5 minutes. In a food processor, purée the saffron and soaking water with the olive oil, lemon juice, honey, lemon zest, red pepper flakes, garlic, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. salt. Add the sun-dried tomatoes, olives, and parsley. Pulse to form a coarsely chopped stuffing (it should be coarser than pesto).

**If any of the backbone** is still attached to the chicken, cut it off with poultry shears. Trim off the side flap with rib meat and bones. Use your finger to make a small opening between the skin and the flesh of the breasts. Run your finger under the skin to separate it from the breasts, making a pocket and being careful not to detach the edges of the skin. Stuff the tomato

mixture into the pocket, distributing it evenly over the chicken. Pat the skin back in place and season with 1 tsp. salt and  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. pepper. Line a heavy-duty rimmed baking sheet with aluminum foil. Roast the chicken on the baking sheet until the juices run clear and a meat thermometer registers 165°F, about 30 minutes.



### NEWS BITE

#### Get your goat

The newest entry into the goat category is cream cheese. California-based Meyenberg has two flavors, plain and garlic & chive, both of which will make your bagel take notice. Or put it on pasta, stir it into mashed potatoes—use it anywhere you would the usual. Available at many supermarkets and online at [meyenberg.com](http://meyenberg.com); \$6 for a 5-oz. tub.





THE FOOD GEEK

# For Butter or Worse

Clarifying how to make butter a more versatile player in the kitchen.

BY BRIAN GEIGER



I LOVE OLIVE OIL. It's versatile, it's easy to cook with, it's even potentially healthful. And yet, alas, even olive oil in all its extra-virgin splendor lacks something: It's not butter.

I really love butter. It's a magical emulsion of water, fat, sugar, and protein, with a taste and texture that makes me glad to be alive. One of the greatest compliments a cook can hear is that a creation is "buttery." (You never want to hear that something tastes "oily.")

But you can't cook with butter all the time. Magical though it may be, and as much as I love it, even I recognize butter's limitations. You would, too, if you'd ever tried to improve on a french fry's inherent goodness by deep frying it in butter. Sounds delicious, right? In

reality, though, heating butter to the point at which you can fry sliced potatoes will give you a burnt mess and a screeching smoke alarm.

So why won't butter cooperate? As with many things in life, the very attribute that makes butter so irresistible is also what makes it misbehave. Butter is about 80 percent fat, 16 percent water, and 4 percent milk solids. It's those milk solids, which are made of protein, sugar, and minerals, that give butter its rich flavor. But when those tasty milk solids get too hot, they start to smoke and burn.

The moment at which fats burn is called the "smoke point." For butter, the smoke point is 350°F. For vegetable oil, which doesn't have any milk solids, the smoke

point is around 450°F. All fats burn if heated enough, but the smoke point for each is different, depending on the amount of free fatty acids (found in all fats, as the name implies) and impurities. That's why light olive oil, which is purified olive oil, has a higher smoke point than extra-virgin olive oil. All of which is a technical way of explaining why you can deep-fry foods in oil but not butter.

Perhaps at some point you were told by a convincing TV chef or read in an otherwise trustworthy cookbook that if you mix butter with oil, it will raise its smoke point. Unfortunately, you were told a terrible lie. Combining butter with oil can be good for flavor purposes, but it does not raise its smoke point.

Adding oil to a pan of butter will spread out the milk solids, but they're still there and they're still going to burn. The myth persists that mixing butter and oil raises butter's smoke point for one simple reason: Since the milk solids are dispersed over a larger surface area, swimming in all that oil, it's not as obvious when they start to smoke and burn.

Before you despair too much over the fact that anytime you cook at 350°F or above you and butter must part ways, let me offer this one bit of encouragement: clarified butter.

Clarifying butter is a simple enough process that involves removing those troublesome milk solids along with much of the water.

Then, butter behaves more like oil and can be heated to about 400°F without fear of smoke or burning.

Pick up a stick of butter and you may wonder how to take out the milk solids and water. But it's actually very easy. As we said before, butter is an emulsion.

If you've ever had a hard time making a Hollandaise sauce, now's your time to shine. Here's why: When you make an emulsified sauce, like Hollandaise, you are attempting

## another butter

Store-bought clarified butter isn't widely available. What you're more likely to see in Asian food stores or online is ghee (pronounced GEE, with a hard G sound). A staple in Indian pantries, ghee is made from a cream that's encouraged to sour a bit, so it has some extra tang compared with clarified butter. Also, the milk solids are browned slightly before being strained out, for a nuttier flavor.

to link oils and water-type liquids together, often with other flavors. If you don't do everything just so, the sauce breaks. When you clarify butter, you are intentionally breaking the emulsion.

Let the clarifying begin. Heat the butter in a small saucepan over medium-low heat. Simmer slowly to boil off the water, 10 to 15 minutes. The white foam that forms on the surface is the milk solids (some may also sink to the bottom). Skim off the foam and then strain the liquid through cheesecloth into a

clean container to filter out the solids that have sunk. You can store your golden clarified butter in the refrigerator, and it will last even longer than regular butter if kept airtight.

You would think that being able to raise butter's smoke point would have me dancing in the streets. But the mixed blessing of clarifying is that removing the milk solids from butter also removes some of its delicious essence, the *je ne sais quoi* that gives it that wonderful, milky richness. Also, clarified butter can't be used in baking without making adjustments for the loss of water.

The process of clarifying does a good job of making butter a more versatile player in the kitchen (I use it for sautéing vegetables over high heat), but limitations persist—it can't be heated as high as many oils, isn't always at hand, and can be pricey if you buy it. That's why olive oil tends to be my go-to fat for cooking. Although the butter dish is never far away.

*Brian J. Geiger is a robotics project manager by day and The Food Geek on nights and weekends. He blogs at FineCooking.com.*

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HOW TO MAKE

# Roast Chicken

It's a classic all cooks need to have in their arsenals—and it's surprisingly simple. Here are the secrets to making the best bird ever. **BY SUSIE MIDDLETON**

## what you need to know

Five essential tips to roasting a perfect chicken

**1 Use high-quality chicken.**

Starting with the best bird is the first step to tasty results (see Test Kitchen, page 77, for a chicken buying guide).

**2 Start breast side down.**

Positioning the chicken breast side down allows all the juices to gather in the breast meat during



first half of cooking. When you flip the bird, those juices slowly redistribute but leave plenty of moisture behind to keep that white meat ultra juicy.

**3 Use high heat.**

Heat is roast chicken's best friend. A 450°F oven browns the skin quickly and keeps it nice and crisp.

**4 Don't overcook.**

An overcooked chicken is a dry chicken. To prevent overcooking, use an instant-read thermometer as your most reliable indicator of doneness (see the tip below for how to use it). It should read 165° to 170°F.

**5 Let it rest.**

Don't be tempted to cut into the chicken as soon as it's out of the oven. Resting for at least 15 minutes on the cutting board allows the juices to redistribute into the meat, making it moist and tender.

## Tool Box

The simple utensils needed for this roast chicken are essential to any well-stocked kitchen:

- Medium flameproof roasting pan (about 9x13 inches)
- Medium roasting rack that fits in the pan
- Sturdy tongs
- Instant-read thermometer
- Carving board



## cook's tip

To get the most accurate temperature reading, insert the instant-read thermometer in the thickest part of the thigh, toward the interior rather than the exterior of the bird. Make sure you don't touch the bone with the tip of the thermometer, or you'll get a higher reading.



## best-ever roast chicken

Serves 4

- 1 4-lb. roasting chicken, giblets removed
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil

**Position a rack** in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 450°F.

**Put the chicken** breast side up on a roasting rack in a medium (9x13-inch or similar) flameproof baking dish or roasting pan. Tuck the wing tips behind the neck and loosely tie the legs together with a piece of kitchen

twine. Season the breast all over with  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. each salt and pepper. Turn the chicken over. Season the back all over with  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. each salt and pepper. Drizzle the oil evenly over the back of the chicken.

**Roast the chicken** breast side down for 30 minutes. Turn it over by inserting sturdy tongs into the cavity and flipping it. Continue roasting until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thigh reads 165° to 170°F, an additional 30 to 35 minutes (see the tip, opposite).

**Transfer the chicken** to a cutting board, loosely tent it with foil, and let it rest for 15 minutes. Snip the twine from the chicken's legs, carve the chicken (see Test kitchen, p. 77, for carving instructions), and serve.

*Susie Middleton* is Fine Cooking's editor at large.



Take roast chicken to the next level with the Easy Pan Sauce at [FineCooking.com](http://FineCooking.com).

# Great Finds

Our latest buys for the kitchen and table. **BY DENISE MICKELSEN**



## Cutting Edge

Made from durable acacia wood, these 13½x9-inch cutting boards have laser-engraved illustrations that interact with the natural grain of the wood to charming effect. Available in vespa, astronaut, skier, eskimo, and diver. **About \$45 at [uptoyoutoronto.com](http://uptoyoutoronto.com); 416-778-6487.**



## A New Look

Aussie Lisa Vincitorio designed this new double-walled glass sugar caster to give the impression that the sugar inside is floating. **\$49 at [alessi-shop.com](http://alessi-shop.com).**



## Nature Comes Inside

Laura Zindel brings flora and fauna into the kitchen with her new Woodstock collection of dinnerware, including this splurge-worthy 17-inch platter. **\$550; 802-254-8930.**



## Oven to Table

Nambé's new line of alloy ovenware has it all: thick cast construction, nonstick interiors, and sleek good looks, which means you can bake and serve with style. Available in 1-, 2-, and 3-quart "Butterfly" covered casseroles and 1- and 2-quart bakers. **\$200 to \$300 at [nambe.com](http://nambe.com); 800-443-0339.**



## Back in Style

Dansk's Flamestone dinnerware line was originally released in 1957, but its recent return to the market shows that good taste never goes out of style. **Hot beverage server, \$50; other pieces, \$15 to \$72 at [dansk.com](http://dansk.com); 800-326-7528.**



## The Right Stuff

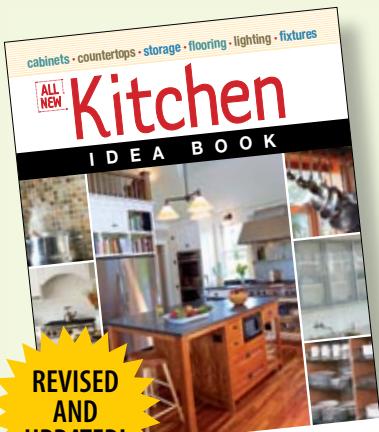
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THE GOOD LIFE

# Mini Food, Big Rewards

From bite-size muffins to sliders, little is a big trend. Nutritionist **Ellie Krieger** thinks cooking and eating small is a smart thing.

THE OTHER DAY MY FRIEND WAS lamenting how much she misses bagels, especially just-baked ones—still warm, soft, and dense inside, crisp and chewy outside. Amazingly, she manages to resist them, sticking to her resolution to cut down on carbs. But it takes all her will power, and she feels deprived. When I mentioned that our local bagel store bakes fresh mini bagels, she jumped up and hugged me. Going mini is the perfect way for her to have her bagel and not overeat it, too.

Maybe that's why small is so big these days. It's the best way to eat what you crave without putting too much of a dent in your diet. Plus, there's something whimsical and fun about scaled-down versions of favorite foods. Who doesn't feel like a child when eating silver dollar pancakes? It's no wonder mini is everywhere—from the supermarket, with bite-size and mini pack versions of cookies, crackers, and candies, to restaurants, where sliders have slid on to every menu.

The irony is that typical serving sizes have gotten so out of hand that what's considered mini today is about the same as our grandparents' standard portion. That mini bagel my friend ran out to buy is just a tad smaller than the 3-inch bagel of 20 years ago.

So when you're out and about, ordering mini can be a great trick for beating portion distortion. And at home, going small is one way of having it all: enjoying indulgent, rich treats while staying healthy and balanced. It's instant portion control.

It can be as simple as cutting your tray of brownies into two-bite squares or using mini muffin tins to create the perfect party-size muffins or cupcakes. That way, each one is not as much an indulgence as a sweet amusement. Same goes for the tiny ice cream sandwiches I like to make with just a couple of tablespoons of ice cream between two vanilla wafer cookies. On the savory side, I use muffin tins for mini quiches or mac-and-cheese bites. And burgers and pizzas are even more fun when they're downsized. The trick—and this is crucial—is to eat just one or two instead of popping them like grapes.

Mini pizzas are a perennial favorite at my house. Their goodness—and wholesomeness—



In Ellie's kitchen, pizza gets a mini makeover.

builds from the base up, starting with a whole wheat crust (the dough is available frozen at most grocery stores). I douse the pizzas with an easy, fresh tomato sauce and then top them with a gorgeous pile of arugula, which wilts perfectly as the pizzas cook, and a few strips of sweet roasted peppers (both vegetables are powerhouses of vitamins and antioxidants). A little prosciutto sprinkled on top gives them

rich flavor; while just the right amount of cheese lends a melty finish. The result is fresh, colorful, and scrumptious. And the best part is that these pizzas are so small, you get to eat three.

I love how something as simple as downsizing your favorite foods allows you to have everything you want while keeping portions in check and eating more healthfully. That's a big payoff.



### good to know

- Whole wheat pizza dough is more nutritious and better for you (think more antioxidants and fiber) than white pizza dough.
- More vegetables than meat plus a fresh, homemade tomato sauce keep this pizza light and healthy.
- Three of these mini pizzas are as satisfying as two big slices of meat pizza, but with 100 fewer calories.

## mini pizzas with arugula, peppers, and prosciutto

You can find pizza dough at many supermarkets. If you have to buy more than the  $\frac{3}{4}$  lb. needed for this recipe, you can freeze the leftover dough.

**Yields 12 mini pizzas; serves 4 as a main course**

- 5 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- $\frac{3}{4}$  lb. pizza dough, preferably whole wheat, thawed if frozen
- 1 14½-oz. can whole tomatoes, drained
- 1 tsp. dried oregano
- 1 large clove garlic, chopped  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 cups lightly packed arugula, chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup thinly sliced roasted red peppers (rinsed if jarred)
- $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. thinly sliced prosciutto di Parma, cut into thin strips (about  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup)
- 1 cup grated part-skim mozzarella
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano  
Crushed red pepper flakes (optional)

**Lightly coat a large bowl** with 1 tsp. of the oil. Put the dough in the bowl, cover loosely, and let sit at room temperature until supple and relaxed, 45 minutes to 1 hour.

**Position racks** in the top and bottom thirds of the oven and heat the oven to 475°F. Meanwhile, put the tomatoes, oregano, garlic, 2 tsp. of the oil, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. each salt and pepper in a food processor; pulse to make a chunky sauce.

**Lightly oil** 2 baking sheets with the remaining 2 tsp. oil. Divide the dough into quarters. Divide each quarter into 3 equal parts; you'll have twelve 1-oz. pieces of dough. (Alternatively, use a scale to divide the dough.) Shape each piece of dough into a 3-inch round and put on the baking sheets.

**Spread about** 1 scant Tbs. of the sauce over each dough round, leaving a little border around the edge for the crust. Top each with a mound of arugula, then some strips of pepper and prosciutto. Sprinkle the mozzarella and Parmigiano on top.

**Bake until the cheese** is bubbling and the crust is browned, 12 to 14 minutes, rotating and swapping the pans' positions about halfway through for even baking. Sprinkle with crushed red pepper flakes (if using) and serve.

*Registered dietitian Ellie Kreiger is a Fine Cooking contributing editor.*



TEST DRIVE

# Meat Grinders

The best options for home use, from the basic manual to powerful electric models. **BY MARYELLEN DRISCOLL**

IF YOU'RE ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE who likes to know exactly where your food comes from and how it's prepared, then a meat grinder might be your next great purchase. Skip the prepackaged ground meats from the grocery and instead buy quality cuts and grind them yourself. You choose the meat, the amount of fat, and the grind, all of which means your hamburgers, meatloaf, sausages, meat-based sauces, and pâtés turn out the way you want them to. Opt for a big, electric meat grinder or a more compact, inexpensive option. Read on to find out which grinder is right for you, and which we liked best in each category. (For a sausage recipe and more information on grinders, see page 68.)

## Three Ways to Grind

Before deciding on what kind of grinder to buy, consider how often you'll use it, how much meat you plan to grind, and your storage space. There are three choices:

**1. Manual grinders** make sense if you want to experiment with grinding meat but aren't ready to make a big investment. This style of meat grinder is perfect for modestly sized grinding tasks, such as a few pounds of meat at a time.

**2. Mixer attachment grinders** are the happy medium if you already own

a stand mixer. The attachments fit right onto your mixer, and they offer the streamlined benefits of a motorized unit without the bulk and noise that comes with an electric grinder.

**3. Electric grinders** are great if you intend to regularly grind meat or make sausages. These grinders are about the size of a food processor and weigh nearly as much. And while noisy, they're designed for grinding meat quickly and cleanly, and they do it very well.



### how we tested

A grinder's ability to grind several pounds of meat quickly without clogging, overheating, or smearing the fat is key. We ground about 5 pounds of cold, cubed boneless pork butt and pork fat back through nine widely available grinders (two manual, three mixer attachments, and four electric).

### THE BEST MANUAL GRINDER

#### Weston Deluxe Manual Tinned Meat Grinder

**\$22.91; [morningbite.com](http://morningbite.com)**  
**Size: 11.75x4.25x8.5 inches**

This size 10 cast-iron manual grinder is perfect for the home cook who wants to grind a few pounds of meat at a time. Its rubber-padded clamp was easy to secure to a countertop, and the 3x4-inch hopper opening was roomy and easy to load with the meat. Most important, both the hardened-steel grinding plates and blade were razor sharp and ground with ease.



## OUR FAVORITE MIXER ATTACHMENT

### Cuisinart Grinder Attachment

\$128.95; [cooking.com](http://cooking.com)  
Size: 10.5x6.5x8 inches

This grinder attachment is well constructed and efficient. It's smaller, easier to store, and much quieter than the electric models we tested and uses the power of the stand mixer's motor for more kick than a manual grinder. Simple to attach and operate, it has thick grinding plates and a sturdy, sharp blade. It comes with fine, medium, and coarse grinding plates, and the food pusher has a detachable lid to hold the extra accessories. (If you own a Viking stand mixer, their grinder attachment performed on par with Cuisinart's.)



## TWO GREAT ELECTRIC GRINDERS

### Maverick Deluxe Food Grinder MM-5501

\$89.95; [comforthouse.com](http://comforthouse.com)  
Size: 12.5x7.5x9 inches

For a lower price tag, this model has a lot to offer (though it has a 90-day warranty and some plastic parts). It has a 575-watt motor with reverse capabilities, and a reset thermometer that automatically turns off the machine before the motor can overheat—a great feature that helps avoid smearing fat as you grind. The grinding plates and blade are made of stainless steel for rust-free storage.



### Waring Pro's MG800 Professional Meat Grinder

\$169.95; [williams-sonoma.com](http://williams-sonoma.com)  
Size: 15.25x9x10.25 inches

This grinder is pricey but worth it. With a heavy-duty 450-watt motor, sturdy metal base, and extra-large hopper (not to mention a five-year warranty), it gets the job done right and quickly. It boasts a reverse function to help avoid clogging, and the food pusher has a compartment inside for storing attachments. But the best feature of this grinder is the toggle switch, a nice touch because you don't have to search for the on/off switch when you're in the middle of grinding.



## what to look for

All of these grinders worked well, but which you choose comes down to the following:

**Manual grinders** bolt or clamp to the edge of a countertop or a table. They come in numerous sizes, ranging from 5 to 31; for home use, sizes 8 and 10 are best because they're not too big yet can still grind 2 to 3 pounds of meat per minute. The most inexpensive choice, manual grinders require the most elbow grease.

**Mixer attachments** range in quality of construction; some are not as well built as their stand-alone counterparts. Check that the model that fits your stand mixer has a large hopper with plenty of room to feed meat through the machine. Also, look for sharp steel grinding plates and blades.

**Electric grinders** range in price depending on the power of the motor. Extra features like thermostats and reverse functions make grinding easy, but those features add to the price of the grinder, so assess your needs before buying.

# Riesling, Changeling

The favorite new white comes from every corner, in styles from dry to sweet. How to choose?

BY DOUG FROST

**RIESLING IS COMING OFF A BAD REP.** It used to be thought of as a wine for beginners—a simple, sweet, easy-drinking German white. Those who drank it admitted to their liking only sheepishly. (It's a shame, really, because a well-crafted sweet Riesling was and is a wonderful thing.)

Fast forward a few years. Now, Riesling is the fastest growing white wine in the American marketplace and has been for nearly two years. So why this explosive growth in Riesling's popularity?

I have a theory. Riesling, a grape with multiple personalities (an unsettling trait in people, but rather likeable in wine), is appealing because it's a changeling of a wine, made from a malleable grape capable of all levels of sweetness and style. With Riesling, it's always possible to discover something new, and its flexibility is the key to its charm.

## True to its terroir

These days, Riesling heralds from many lands (not just Germany) and exhibits more styles than ever before. France, Austria, Australia, New Zealand, North America, South America, and South Africa—not to mention Italy and southeastern Europe—are just a few of the countries and regions now growing this impressionable grape.

Depending on where it's from, Riesling can be juicy, floral, earthy, tangy, tart, or fruity. Don't be surprised to taste or smell lemons, limes, oranges, tangerines, grapefruits, peaches, nectarines, apricots, apples, pears, melons, bananas, papayas, mangos, or pineapples—the list goes on. Sometimes Riesling is sweet; sometimes it's dry. Just as often it's something in between.

Apart from Riesling's different flavor profiles, the wine's styles are as varied as its home countries: There are crisp and racy New Zealand versions; pungent, aromatic Aussie Rieslings; soft and delicate ones from New York and Michigan; powerful, dry Rieslings from Alsace and Austria. These enter a marketplace already con-

fused by the myriad styles of German Rieslings, from lemon-lime tangy to pancake-syrup sweet.

Rieslings grown on the slate soils of some German and Alsatian vineyards smell intensely of honey, minerals, and beeswax (the Germans call the aroma *firne*). Far away in Australia's Clare and Eden Valleys, similar slate soils provide many of the same smells.

Other Riesling vineyards in Germany, Alsace, and Austria might have fewer slate rocks and express few of those notes. Rather, limestone, granite, alluvial, and volcanic soils bring their own flavors and aromas, each adding a distinct layer to Riesling's complex brew.

## Lacy to racy, crisp to coy

Just as personality is dependent on terroir, so is a wine's potency. Alcohol levels in wine depend on how ripe the grapes are at crush. The warmer the climate, the riper the grapes and the more alcoholic the resulting wine. In the middle of Germany's relatively cool Mosel River Valley, Riesling has a lacy delicacy from very low alcohol levels (less than 10 percent). No other grape is as interesting at such timid levels. Rieslings in Austria and Alsace are often much bolder, with 14 percent alcohol or more. America's West Coast Rieslings are somewhere in between; Michigan and New York's versions, as well as New Zealand's, tend to be lower in alcohol, similar to Germany's.

To top it all off, Riesling labels don't help matters. German wine labels can be as confusing as an Umberto Eco plot synopsis. Sweetness information is scarce, though that may be changing.

A worldwide group of Riesling producers, under the rubric of the International Riesling Foundation, has devised a back label that provides some guidance. Participating wineries (producers everywhere have either signed up or are watching closely) will include a Riesling taste profile on their labels,



and their wines will be designated as dry, medium dry, medium sweet, or sweet. With this new clarity, maybe some folks who haven't yet fallen in love with the grape will join the Riesling rush.

## Riesling reconsidered

Its popularity may be on the rise, but who exactly is draining these Riesling bottles dry? It doesn't seem to be conservative wine buyers, who, put off by Riesling's reputation as a sweet wine, overlook its potential. It's got to be the foodies, chefs, and wine writers (yours truly included) who have been

insisting for years that the grape has been wrongly dismissed. After all, just because Riesling is easy to enjoy doesn't mean we should look down on it. Does great wine have to be difficult to drink?

Wine experts and chefs alike have long championed the Riesling grape for its flexibility and compatibility with a wide variety of cuisines. The tart-sweet nature of many Rieslings explains the grape's ability to pair well with food, especially spicy dishes that benefit from a touch of fruit or sweetness. Its gentle demeanor doesn't overwhelm lighter foods like shellfish (oysters and clams in particular), grilled fish, and pork, which can be overpow-

ered by or even taste slightly bitter with bigger, more buttery whites like Chardonnay.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not about to grill someone for pouring a Chardonnay with shellfish, roast beef, or anything else for that matter. But with robust growth, new countries, adventurous drinkers, chefs, and wine writers on Riesling's side, it seems clear that its Sybil-like nature is not a bad thing. Perhaps Riesling's many personalities—sweet, dry, fruity, soft, bold, intense, mild—have a little something for everyone.

*Doug Frost is a wine consultant and writer based in Kansas City, Missouri.*

## Riesling: A Buying Guide

To really understand the range of Rieslings, consider trying bottles along the spectrum of dry to fruity.

DRY AND LIGHT	DRY AND TANGY	DRY AND EARTHY	FRUITY AND TANGY
<b>Left Foot Charley Dry Riesling 2007, Michigan (\$16)</b> This remarkable winery in Michigan's Old Mission Peninsula lakeside vineyards produces great wines, but you need to shop in Michigan or call the winery to buy this beauty.	<b>Standing Stone Riesling 2007, New York (\$15)</b> The Finger Lakes region has more Riesling producers than any other area in the U.S., and this rich, crisp bottle is a great introduction to these wines.	<b>Trefethen Riesling 2007, California (\$25)</b> Refreshing, lemony, and tangy, this Napa Valley wine could last several years in the cellar.	<b>Grosset Springvale Watervale Riesling 2007, Australia (\$35)</b> One of the country's top producers from the Clare Valley offers Riesling with richness, citric tartness, and distinctive earth flavors.

<b>Trimbach Riesling 2006, France (\$25)</b> The Alsace region straddles Germany, and with its rocky soils, adds a few more juicy layers to Riesling's panoply of fruits.	<b>Gunderloch Jean-Baptiste Kabinett 2007, Germany (\$20)</b> If I had a house wine, this Rhine River bottle would be it: green apples, peaches, and always bracingly tart, too.	<b>Selbach-Oster Kabinett 2007, Germany (\$22)</b> From the Mosel River area, this is soft, delicate, only a bit sweet, and has a lovely, long finish. It's surprisingly age-worthy.
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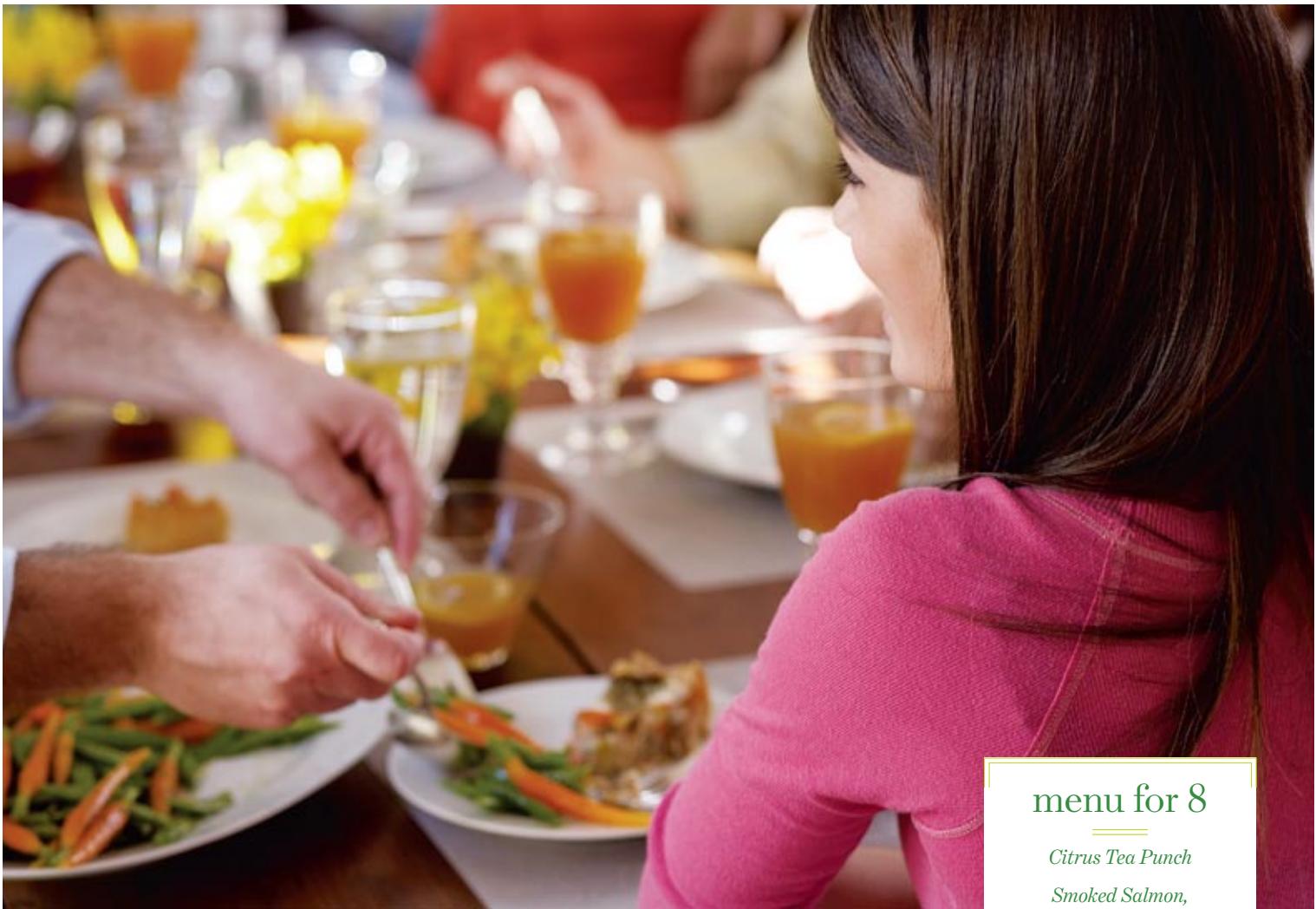




# Rise & Party

Got a special occasion? Here's an easy, elegant brunch menu that works every time. **BY MARTHA STAMPS**

**Smoked Salmon, Goat Cheese,  
and Artichoke Quiche**



## menu for 8

*Citrus Tea Punch*

*Smoked Salmon,  
Goat Cheese,  
and Artichoke Quiche*

*Peas and Carrots with  
Lemon, Dill, and Mint*

*Fresh Fruit*

*Wild Blueberry and  
Ricotta Pancakes*

**SPRING HOLIDAYS** just seem to lend themselves to a brunch menu, especially one that makes the most of everything that's coming up fresh now. Brunch has a festive feel, too—a good excuse to set a lovely table and even dress up a little.

This menu runs with both of those ideas, getting its start with seasonal ingredients like baby carrots, sugar snap peas, and artichoke hearts, and giving them an elegant spin (don't miss the quiche, with its high-sided, free-form crust). And since we're celebrating, why not dust off the punch bowl and make the mint and citrus tea punch? It will give your party that extra something special.



Passionfruit, mini pineapples, and chunks of kiwi give the classic fruit platter a little edge.

## smoked salmon, goat cheese, and artichoke quiche

If you can't find hot-smoked salmon, cold-smoked will also be scrumptious, although it will lose some of its silky texture once it's baked.

**Serves 8**

### FOR THE CRUST

- 9 oz. (2 cups) all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp. granulated sugar
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 8 oz. (1 cup) cold unsalted butter, cut into  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch cubes
- 4–6 Tbs. ice water

### FOR THE FILLING

- 1 oz. (2 Tbs.) unsalted butter
- $\frac{1}{2}$  medium red onion, thinly sliced crosswise (1 cup)
- 24 frozen artichoke heart quarters, thawed
- 4 large eggs
- 1 cup heavy cream
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup whole milk
- 1 Tbs. roughly chopped fresh dill
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Pinch nutmeg
- 6 oz. hot-smoked salmon, skin removed and roughly broken into  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch pieces (1 cup)
- 4 oz. fresh goat cheese, crumbled ( $\frac{1}{4}$  cup)

### MAKE THE CRUST

In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, mix the flour, sugar, and salt on low speed. Add the butter and mix until the largest pieces are the size of peas. With the mixer still on low, add the ice water 1 Tbs. at a time until the dough just begins to come together—you may not need all the water. Transfer the dough to a piece of plastic and shape it into a disk. Wrap in the plastic and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes.

**Roll the dough** on a lightly floured surface into a 15-inch circle about  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch thick. Transfer to a 9-inch springform pan and press the dough into the bottom and up the sides, pressing any pleats flat against the sides. With scissors, unevenly snip any dough that overhangs the rim, to make a jagged edge. Prick the bottom of the crust all over with a fork. Freeze for 20 minutes.

**Position a rack** in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Line the frozen crust with two overlapping sheets of parchment and fill two-thirds of the way with dried beans. Bake until the sides are set, about 25 minutes. Remove the beans and parchment and bake until the crust just begins to brown lightly, another 8 to 10 minutes. Remove from the oven and let cool on a rack. Meanwhile, raise the oven temperature to 400°F.

### MAKE THE FILLING

Melt the butter in a 10-inch sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until soft and turning translucent, about 3 minutes. Add the artichoke hearts and cook until softened and slightly browned, another 3 to 4 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat.

**Beat the eggs** in a medium bowl with the cream, milk, 1 tsp. of the dill,  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. salt,  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. pepper, and the nutmeg.

**Put the springform pan** on a rimmed baking sheet. Pour about half of the egg mixture into the crust. Bake in the oven until the filling is partially set (it will still be slightly runny), about 20 minutes.

**Scatter half** of the onion and artichoke mixture over the partially set egg mixture. Distribute half of the salmon and goat cheese on top. Pour on the remaining egg mixture and then scatter the remaining onions, artichokes, salmon, and goat cheese over the egg. Sprinkle the remaining dill over the top.

**Bake until the center** is just set (use a paring knife to peek), another 40 to 50 minutes. Check about halfway through baking; if the crust seems to be browning too fast, shield it with strips of foil. Cool slightly on a wire rack.

**To unmold**, remove the springform ring and loosen the quiche from the pan's bottom by running a thin-bladed knife between the two. Slide the quiche off its base onto a serving plate. Serve warm or at room temperature, cut in wedges.

**Make ahead:** You can bake the crust up to a day ahead and the quiche up to 2 hours ahead.



**Smoked Salmon, Goat Cheese, and  
Artichoke Quiche and Peas and Carrots  
with Lemon, Dill, and Mint**



Peas and Carrots with  
Lemon, Dill, and Mint

## peas and carrots with lemon, dill, and mint

Remember the frozen version of peas and carrots? The dish gets an update here: no square carrots in sight.

**Serves 8**

**1-2 medium lemons**

**½ cup extra-virgin olive oil**

**1 Tbs. minced fresh mint**

**1 tsp. minced fresh dill**

**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

**2 bunches small young carrots, preferably with tops (about 2 lb.)**

**8 oz. fresh sugar snap peas, trimmed and strings removed**

**Finely grate**  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. zest from a lemon and then juice the lemon to yield  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup (if it yields less, juice the second lemon). In a large bowl, whisk the zest, juice, oil, mint, dill,  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. salt, and  $\frac{1}{8}$  tsp. pepper.

**Trim the tips** and all but about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch of the greens from the carrots and then peel them. In a large pot fitted with a steamer insert, bring an inch of water to a boil over high heat. Have ready a large bowl of ice water. Lay the carrots in the basket of the steamer, cover tightly, and steam until crisp-tender, 4 to 5 minutes. Cool the carrots in the ice water for a few minutes; then lift them out and add to the dressing.

**Steam the peas** in the same pot until barely tender, about 3 minutes. Cool them in the ice water for a few minutes, drain, and add to the carrots. Stir to coat the vegetables in the dressing. Taste and add more salt, if needed.

**Let the vegetables** sit for at least 30 minutes and up to 1 hour, tossing occasionally. With a slotted spoon, transfer the vegetables to a serving platter. Serve chilled or at room temperature.

### Make ahead:

You can make the entire dish up to 1 hour in advance.



## citrus tea punch

Sweet iced tea is a southern staple. Adding fresh lemon and orange juice transforms it into a punch that can be made even more festive with a splash of vodka.

**Yields 2 quarts**

**3 oz. fresh spearmint (2 bunches)**

**2 large "pitcher-size" tea bags (for iced tea), such as Tetley or Lipton**

**1½ cups granulated sugar**

**1 cup fresh lemon juice (from 4 to 6 medium lemons)**

**1 cup fresh orange juice (from about 4 medium oranges)**

**1 cup vodka (optional)**

**1 lemon, thinly sliced or cut into wedges, for garnish**

**Put the mint** in a large heatproof pitcher and pour in 6 cups boiling water. Add the tea bags and let steep for 30 minutes. Remove the tea bags, strain out the mint, and stir in the sugar and juices. Let cool to room temperature and add the vodka (if using). Refrigerate until cold. Stir before serving. Serve over ice, garnished with the sliced lemon.



Pancakes for dessert—why not? Once everyone has finished the main course, head for the kitchen to start batches of these blueberry-studded gems. Serve them with butter, maple syrup, and confectioners' sugar.

## wild blueberry and ricotta pancakes

Ricotta makes these pancakes light and creamy. It's the perfect foil for the intense sweet-tart flavor of wild blueberries, which are widely available frozen. You can also use cultivated blueberries, which are larger but still sweet and delicious.

**Yields about 18 pancakes**

- 3 large eggs, separated
- ¾ cup part-skim ricotta, drained of excess liquid before measuring
- 2½ cups buttermilk
- 5 Tbs. granulated sugar
- 1 Tbs. pure vanilla extract
- ¾ tsp. table salt
- 8 oz. (1¼ cups) all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- ¼ tsp. baking soda
- 6 oz. frozen wild blueberries (don't thaw) or fresh wild or cultivated blueberries (1½ cups)
- Vegetable oil for the griddle
- Softened salted butter, pure maple syrup, and confectioner's sugar, for serving

**In a large bowl**, whisk the egg yolks and ricotta. Whisk in the buttermilk, sugar, vanilla, and salt.

**In a small bowl**, stir the flour, baking powder, and baking soda with a spatula. Fold into the egg yolk mixture until just combined.

**Beat the egg whites** in a clean, dry bowl until they hold firm peaks. Fold gently into the batter until just combined. Fold in the blueberries.

**Lightly oil a griddle** and set it over medium heat. The griddle is ready when water droplets dance briefly on the surface before disappearing. Ladle a scant ¼ cup batter per pancake onto the griddle. Cook until the undersides are nicely browned, the edges look set, and small bubbles appear on the surface, about 3 minutes. Flip and cook until the second sides are golden brown, about 3 minutes more. Repeat, re-oiling the griddle between batches, until all the batter is cooked. Serve at once with butter, maple syrup, and confectioners' sugar.

*Martha Stamps is chef-owner of Martha's at the Plantation in Nashville, Tennessee, and the author of The New Southern Basics cookbook. □*



Wild Blueberry and Ricotta Pancakes



# mint condition

Spring's number one herb in six fresh recipes.

BY JESSICA BARD

Mint is mint is mint. Right? So it would seem, given that supermarkets carry only one kind (which is almost always spearmint). But go to a farmers' market in spring and you'll find small pots of fragrant orange, apple, and pineapple mint, zesty ginger mint, and even chocolate mint. The variety is mind-boggling, and the smells alone are enough to send you straight to the kitchen. And once you see these recipes, that will seem like an even better idea.





Derby Day Mint Julep Cocktail,  
recipe on page 48



## toasted israeli couscous salad with mint, cucumber, and feta

This refreshing pasta salad is a nice accompaniment to barbecued meats and a welcome contribution to a potluck.

**Serves 4 to 6**

### Kosher salt

- 1 cup Israeli couscous**
- 1 medium English cucumber, peeled and finely diced (2 cups)**
- ½ cup coarsely chopped fresh spearmint or pineapple mint leaves; additional sprigs for garnish**
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil**
- 2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice; more as needed**
- 1 tsp. finely grated lemon zest**
- Freshly ground black pepper**
- 1 cup small-diced feta cheese**

**In a large saucepan**, bring 2 quarts well-salted water to a boil.

**Meanwhile**, in a medium skillet over medium heat, toast the couscous, stirring frequently, until golden-brown, about 7 minutes.

**Cook the couscous** in the boiling water until tender, about 10 minutes. Drain and rinse under cold running water until cool. Pour the couscous into a large mixing bowl. Stir in the cucumber and mint.

**In a small bowl**, mix the oil, lemon juice and zest,  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. salt, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. pepper. Stir in the feta. Add the feta mixture to the couscous, season to taste with salt, pepper, and lemon juice, and mix well. Transfer to a serving bowl and garnish with the mint sprigs.

**Make ahead:** You can refrigerate the salad for up to 4 hours; toss before serving.

## a buyer's guide

There are more than 200 mint varieties, all of which fall into one of two categories: spearmint or peppermint. They're similar in taste and aroma, but peppermints contain menthol, which gives them a stronger character and a cooling sensation. Here's a guide for some of the common varieties.

### SPEARMINT

The most versatile of mints, spearmint has a natural affinity with fruits and spring vegetables (think peas, asparagus, and artichokes), herbs like basil and cilantro, and spices like ginger, cumin, and cardamom. Its relatively mild flavor makes it ideal for a variety of savory dishes, including grilled and roasted meats.

#### Spearmint varieties:

**Pineapple mint** With a fruity scent reminiscent of pineapple and a flavor that's a bit sweeter than regular spearmint, pineapple mint complements other fresh, fruity flavors and livens up rich cheeses and meats.

**Apple mint** Its gentle spearmint flavor has a hint of green apple. It's lovely in iced tea.

#### Curly and smooth-leaf mint

Both taste just like spearmint but have different textures. Curly mint is ruffled and a bit coarser, while smooth-leaf mint is soft and velvety. Use them to add textural variety to a dish.

### PEPPERMINT

Peppermint is assertive enough to stand up to strong flavors, so it's ideal for chocolate desserts and boldly flavored dishes.

#### Peppermint varieties:

**Orange mint** Overtones of orange and sometimes bergamot make it a perfect choice when you want to add a citrusy note.

**Chocolate mint** This peppermint has an unmistakable hint of chocolate that makes it ideal for desserts featuring chocolate and berries.

**Ginger mint** The ginger notes complement dishes that use fresh or powdered ginger.

**Grapefruit mint** Hints of grapefruit set off anything with citrus zest.

## poached flounder with mint beurre blanc

This classic shallow-poached fish is served with a minty French butter sauce. It's delicious with a simple rice pilaf and tender green spring vegetables like peas or baby spinach.

Serves 4

- 6 skinless flounder fillets (1½ lb. total)**
- ½ tsp. ground ginger**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- 3½ Tbs. coarsely chopped fresh spearmint or ginger mint leaves**
- ¼ cup minced shallots**
- ¼ cup dry white wine**
- 2 Tbs. heavy cream**
- 2 oz. (4 Tbs.) cold unsalted butter, cut into 8 slices**
- 1 Tbs. thinly sliced chives**

**Lay the fish fillets** skinned side up on a cutting board. Slice each fillet in half lengthwise to make 12 strips. In a small bowl mix the ginger, ¼ tsp. salt, and ¼ tsp. pepper. Sprinkle the spice mixture evenly over all the fish and then sprinkle with 2 Tbs. of the chopped mint. Roll each strip into a coil, starting with the fatter end and aligning the roll along the cut edge. Secure with a toothpick, pushing it into the thin end and through the other side.

**Sprinkle the shallots** over the bottom of a 10-inch straight-sided sauté pan. Arrange the fish coils cut edge down in the pan. Pour in the wine and ½ cup water. Turn the heat to medium high and bring the liquid to a simmer. Adjust the heat to maintain a gentle simmer, cover, and poach the fish until cooked through, 4 to 8 minutes. Use a slotted spoon to

transfer the fish to a warm plate. Tent with foil while finishing the sauce.

**Increase the heat** to high and boil the liquid until it's reduced to about 3 Tbs. (It should just barely cover the bottom of the pan.) Add the cream and boil for 30 seconds. Reduce the heat to low and whisk in 2 slices of the cold butter, the remaining 1½ Tbs. mint, and the chives. When the butter is almost melted, add another slice and whisk until mostly melted. Repeat with the remaining butter, 1 slice at a time. (Take care not to overheat the sauce or it will separate.) Season to taste with salt and pepper.

**Remove the toothpicks** from each piece of fish. Serve the fish (3 pieces per serving) drizzled with the sauce.





Roast Rack of Lamb with  
Lemon-Mint Salsa Verde

## roast rack of lamb with lemon-mint salsa verde

Plan ahead because the lamb needs to marinate for at least 8 hours. To serve, lean the cut chops up against a pile of roasted garlic mashed potatoes and a side of bright green beans.

**Serves 8**

- 2 medium lemons
- 1 cup packed fresh spearmint or grapefruit mint leaves (1 oz.)
- 2 Tbs. chopped garlic
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 frenched racks of lamb (8 ribs and 1 to 1½ lb. each)

**Finely grate 1 Tbs. zest** from the lemons and then squeeze them to yield 3 Tbs. juice. Combine the zest and juice with the mint, garlic, 2 tsp. salt, and 1 tsp. pepper in a food processor. Pulse a few times and then with the motor running, add the oil. Reserve ¼ cup and refrigerate.

**Trim the fat** on the lamb racks to a ¼-inch-thick layer. Poke holes all over the lamb with a fork to help the marinade penetrate. Lightly score the fat layer about ¼ inch deep in a ½-inch diamond pattern. Arrange the racks, fat side up, in a 9x13-inch baking dish, overlapping the bones if necessary to fit the racks in the dish. Brush the remaining salsa verde all over the racks. Cover and refrigerate for at least 8 hours and up to 24 hours.

**Heat the oven to 425°F.** Take the lamb out of the fridge and arrange the racks fat side up in a large roasting pan (or rimmed baking sheet)—they should fit in one layer. Brush the top and sides of each rack with 1 Tbs. of the reserved salsa verde. Roast for 15 minutes. Brush with 1 Tbs. more of the salsa verde and continue to roast to an internal temperature of 130° to 135°F for medium rare, an additional 15 to 20 minutes. Let the meat rest for 5 minutes before carving into chops. Drizzle the remaining salsa verde over each serving.



## white bean salad with mint and red onion

This is a flavorful bean salad that goes well with most meat and poultry, particularly roasted pork tenderloin or broiled lamb chops.

**Serves 4**

- ½ cup small-diced red bell pepper
  - 2 Tbs. nonpareil (small) capers
  - 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
  - Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- ½ cup small-diced red onion
  - 3 Tbs. sherry vinegar
  - 1 15-oz. can white beans, drained and rinsed (like Great Northern)
  - ½ cup roughly chopped fresh spearmint or smooth-leaf spearmint leaves

**In a small bowl**, mix the onion and vinegar; let sit for 15 minutes. In a medium bowl, mix the onions and vinegar with the beans, mint, red pepper, capers, olive oil, and salt and pepper to taste.

## keep it fresh

**Make a bouquet** Store mint bunches with the cut stems in a glass of water and cover the leaves with a plastic bag. Refrigerate, changing the water every couple of days. It should stay fresh for at least 1 week.

**Be gentle** Mint starts to blacken after it's cut, so wait until the last minute before chopping or tearing it and adding it to a dish. When appropriate, tear the leaves gently instead of cutting them, to help prevent blackening.



Find a bonus recipe for Date-Mint Chutney at [FineCooking.com/extras](http://FineCooking.com/extras).



## derby day mint julep cocktail

There are as many variations of the mint julep as there are thoroughbreds that have run in the Kentucky Derby, which is when this sweet concoction is traditionally served. It's often stirred with ice in a silver cup; this version calls for shaking with a slice of lemon for a frothy, refreshing drink.

**Yields 14 cocktails**

### MINT SYRUP

- 25 fresh spearmint or apple mint leaves
- ¾ cup granulated sugar

### FOR THE JULEPS

- 3½ quarts crushed ice
- 3½ cups bourbon (such as Maker's Mark or Knob Creek)
- 14 thin slices lemon
- 14 sprigs spearmint or apple mint

**Make the mint syrup:** In a small saucepan, stir the mint with the sugar and ¾ cup water, crushing the mint lightly with the spoon. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat and boil for 1 minute. Remove from the heat and let cool in the pan, about 30 minutes. Strain into a small container. Use immediately to make the cocktails or chill for up to 2 weeks.

**For each cocktail:** Have a chilled 8- to 10-oz. cocktail or wine glass ready. In a cocktail shaker, combine 1 Tbs. of the mint syrup with 1 cup ice, ¼ cup bourbon, and a lemon slice. Shake for 30 seconds; pour into the chilled glass. Garnish with a mint sprig.

## strawberry-mint shortcakes

Minty sugar-crusted biscuits, strawberries, and sweetened sour cream come together for a new take on a traditional favorite. For the freshest color, slice the mint for the berries just before you need it.

**Serves 8**

- 3 Tbs. packed, finely chopped fresh spearmint, peppermint, or chocolate mint leaves, plus 1 Tbs. thinly sliced
- ¾ cup granulated sugar
- 9 oz. (2 cups) unbleached all-purpose flour; more for rolling the dough
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. table salt
- 2 oz. (4 Tbs.) cold unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch pieces, plus 1 Tbs., melted, for brushing
- ¾ cup half-and-half
- 1 quart strawberries, hulled and quartered lengthwise
- 1 cup sour cream

**Position a rack** in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 400°F. Draw or trace an 8-inch circle on each of two pieces of parchment and flip them over so you see the circle through the parchment.

**In a small bowl**, mix the finely chopped mint with 3 Tbs. of the sugar, gently pressing with the back of a spoon until the sugar becomes damp, like wet sand; set aside.

**In a large bowl**, mix the flour, 2 Tbs. of the sugar, baking powder, and salt. With a pastry blender, cut in the butter until the mixture resembles coarse cornmeal. Stir in the half-and-half and mix just until the dough comes together in a ball and all bits of flour have been incorporated.

**Divide the dough** in half and shape into two disks. Lightly flour one piece of parchment and roll out one disk into a 8-inch circle, using the parchment circle as a guide. Flour the surface as needed to keep the dough from sticking. Repeat with the remaining dough and parchment. Brush any excess flour off the parchment. Transfer one of the circles, still on its parchment, to a large rimmed baking sheet. Brush it with

half of the melted butter and spread with half of the remaining mint sugar.

**Invert the second** dough round onto the first and remove the top parchment. Brush the top with the remaining butter and spread with the remaining mint sugar. Cut the dough into 8 wedges (a pizza cutter works well). Use an off-set spatula to gently move the wedges at least 1 inch apart (keeping the tops and bottoms aligned). Bake until the biscuits are lightly browned and the sugar crust has set, 20 to 22 minutes—it's fine if they haven't risen much. Cool on a rack until ready to assemble.

**While the biscuits bake**, mix the strawberries with ¼ cup of the sugar in a medium bowl; let sit at room temperature. In a small bowl, stir the sour cream and the remaining 3 Tbs. sugar; refrigerate until ready to use.

### TO ASSEMBLE EACH SHORTCAKE

Stir the thinly sliced mint into the strawberries. Gently twist (or pry with a fork) a biscuit to separate the top and bottom. Set the bottom on a serving plate and top with about ½ cup strawberries and some juice. Spoon on 1½ Tbs. sweetened sour cream and top with the other half of the biscuit. Add another small dollop of cream, if you like.

*Jessica Bard is a food writer and recipe tester who teaches cooking classes at Warren Kitchen and Cutlery in Rhinebeck, New York. □*

## grow your own

The best way to try some of the more unusual varieties of mint is to grow them (you can find plants at most nurseries or online; see Where to Buy It, page 89). Mint is a quick and often rampant grower. It can be planted almost anywhere, though it does best with at least half a day's sunlight and plenty of water.



A close-up view of a single shortcake dessert. It features a golden-brown, crumbly shortcake base topped with a dollop of white whipped cream and a generous amount of finely chopped mint leaves. The dessert is surrounded by fresh, vibrant red strawberries, some whole and some sliced, all resting on a white plate.

Strawberry-Mint Shortcakes



a sweet bite  
of  
**Brazil**



Class description: **Leticia Moreinos** reveals the secrets to brigadeiros, a classic candy from her native Brazil. Prerequisites: None (except maybe a sweet tooth).

COOKING TEACHER Leticia Moreinos has one thing on her mind: to put Brazilian cooking on the map. "Brazilian food is too often bunched in with other Latin American foods," says Leticia. "I want everyone to know that we have our own very distinctive cuisine."

A native of Rio de Janeiro, Leticia learned to cook from her family's housekeeper—and collected dozens of recipes in the process. As an adult, she moved to New York to go to culinary school and later worked at some of the city's most renowned French restaurants. But those childhood recipes haunted her, and it wasn't long before she gave up sauces and reductions to return to her roots. Now, she's spreading the word through her popular Brazilian cooking classes, including this one, on Brazil's national treat: the brigadeiro.



**Brigadeiros, step-by-step.** They may look like truffles, but they're more like little fudge balls made with sweetened condensed milk and covered not with cocoa powder but sprinkles. Leticia shows us how to make them, beginning to end (recipe, page 54).



1

Class begins with Leticia bringing condensed milk, butter, cream, and corn syrup to a boil before she whisks in chocolate and cocoa powder. "Traditionally, brigadeiros' flavor comes from cocoa powder," says Leticia. "But the way I figure it, why not make it with the real stuff? I like to use the best-quality dark chocolate."



2

As the brigadeiro mixture cooks over a medium-low burner, it slowly begins to thicken. "It starts to feel like fudge," says Leticia. "You know you're almost done when you see whisk trails in the batter."



3

"Learning when to stop cooking the batter is the trickiest part of making brigadeiros," Leticia warns. "If the batter is undercooked, your brigadeiros will be too soft; if the batter is overcooked, they will be hard and chewy." The batter is done when it slides to one side of the pan in a blob and leaves a thick residue on the bottom.



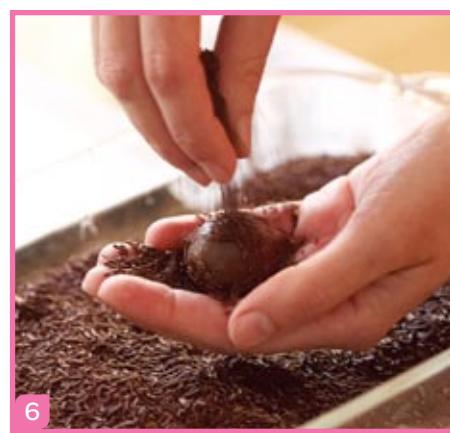
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A small ice cream scoop (see Where to Buy It, page 89, for a source) is Leticia's tool of choice for scooping up the batter, but a melon baller or a teaspoon works just fine.



5

"Rolling the scooped-up batter between the palms of your hands is the best way to get a smooth, even ball," suggests Leticia.



6

To coat a brigadeiro evenly, Leticia covers it with sprinkles and then rolls it gently in her hands, exerting the slightest pressure to make sure the sprinkles adhere.



**TOP TIP**

Great texture is all about knowing just how long to cook the batter. It should slide out of the pan, leaving a thick residue behind.

*Chocolate brigadeiros are classic, but coconut and pistachio are tasty variations.*

## the secret ingredient



Brigadeiros get their distinctive flavor and melt-in-your-mouth texture mainly from sweetened condensed milk, which is a bit of a national obsession in Brazil. It's used in hundreds of recipes and is the base for some of the most popular Brazilian sweets—brigadeiros included. Every cook has condensed milk stashed in the pantry. Most likely it's a can of Nestlé's Leite Moça ("the lady's milk"), Brazil's favorite brand since 1922.

## Make them last

Store brigadeiros in a tightly covered container at room temperature for up to two days or in the refrigerator for up to two weeks. (If refrigerating, bring to room temperature before serving for the best flavor and texture.)



## chocolate brigadeiros

Like many Brazilian sweets, brigadeiros are named after a famous personality. Brigadier Eduardo Gomes was a well-known Brazilian Air Force commander who loved chocolate. Legend has it that chocolate brigadeiros were created for and named after him.

### Yields about 3 dozen

- 1 14-oz. can sweetened condensed milk
- 2 Tbs. unsalted butter
- 2 Tbs. heavy cream
- 1 tsp. light corn syrup
- 1½ oz. semisweet or bittersweet chocolate (preferably 60% to 62% cacao), chopped
- 1 tsp. Dutch-process cocoa powder
- 1 cup chocolate sprinkles (preferably Guittard)

**Put the condensed milk**, butter, cream, and corn syrup in a 3-quart heavy-duty saucepan and bring to a boil over medium heat, whisking constantly. Add the chocolate and cocoa powder and continue to whisk, making sure there are no pockets of cocoa powder. As soon as the mixture comes back to a boil, turn the heat to medium low and cook, whisking constantly, until the mixture thickens and pulls together into a dense, fudgy batter, about 8 minutes. When the mixture is ready, the whisk will leave trails in the batter, allowing you to briefly see the pan bottom, and when you tilt the pan, the mixture should slide to the side in a blob, leaving a thick residue on the bottom of the pan.

**Slide the mixture** into a bowl. (Don't scrape the pan—you don't want to use any of the batter stuck to the bottom.) Let the mixture cool to room temperature and then refrigerate uncovered until very firm, 3 to 4 hours.

**Put the sprinkles** in a bowl. Using a teaspoon or a melon baller, scoop the mixture by the teaspoonful, and with your hands, roll each into a ball about 1 inch in diameter. Drop each ball into the sprinkles as you finish rolling it. When you have 4 to 6 brigadeiros, toss them in the sprinkles to coat. You may need to exert a little pressure to ensure that the sprinkles stick.



## pistachio brigadeiros

**Yields about 3 dozen**

- 1 14-oz. can sweetened condensed milk
- ½ cup heavy cream
- ½ cup plus 2 Tbs. finely ground pistachios
- 2 tsp. light corn syrup
- 1 tsp. unsalted butter

**Put the condensed milk**, cream, 6 Tbs. ground pistachios, corn syrup, and butter in a 3-quart heavy-duty saucepan and bring to a boil over medium heat. Turn the heat to medium low, and cook, whisking constantly, until the mixture thickens and pulls together into a dense batter, about 12 minutes. When the mixture is ready, the whisk will leave trails in the batter, allowing you to briefly see the pan bottom, and when you tilt the pan, the mixture should slide to the side in a blob, leaving a thick residue on the bottom of the pan.

**Slide the mixture** into a bowl. (Don't scrape the pan—you don't want to use any of the batter stuck to the bottom.) Let the mixture cool to room temperature and then refrigerate until very firm, 3 to 4 hours.

**Put the remaining** ¼ cup ground pistachios in a bowl. Using a teaspoon or a melon baller, scoop the mixture by the teaspoonful, and with your hands, roll each into a ball about 1 inch in diameter. Drop each ball into the pistachios as you finish rolling it. When you have 4 to 6 brigadeiros, roll them in the pistachios and lift them out with your fingers semi-open, carefully shaking off the excess. If the pistachios don't stick to the outside, re-warm the balls by rolling them briefly between your hands and then try to coat them again.

## coconut brigadeiros

**Yields about 3 dozen**

- 1 cup sweetened condensed milk
- ½ cup coconut milk
- 2 Tbs. unsalted butter
- 2 tsp. light corn syrup
- 1 cup finely shredded, unsweetened coconut (toasted, if desired)

**Put the condensed milk**, coconut milk, butter, corn syrup, and ½ cup of the coconut in a 3-quart heavy-duty saucepan and bring to a boil over medium heat. Turn the heat to medium low and cook, whisking constantly, until the mixture thickens and pulls together into a dense batter, about 8 minutes. When the mixture is ready, the whisk will leave trails in the batter, allowing you to briefly see the pan bottom, and when you tilt the pan, the mixture should slide to the side in a blob, leaving a thick residue on the bottom of the pan. (It's OK if the residue is slightly brown.)

**Slide the mixture** into a bowl. (Don't scrape the pan—you don't want to use any of the batter stuck to the bottom.) Let the mixture cool to room temperature and then refrigerate until very firm, 3 to 4 hours.

**Put the remaining** ½ cup coconut in a bowl. Using a teaspoon or a melon baller, scoop the mixture by the teaspoonful, and with your hands, roll each into a ball about 1 inch in diameter. Drop each ball into the coconut as you finish rolling it. When you have 4 to 6 brigadeiros, roll them in the coconut and lift them out with your fingers semi-open, carefully shaking off the excess.

**Note:** If you can't find finely shredded unsweetened coconut, you can buy coconut chips or flaked coconut and run it through a food processor until it looks like it was grated on the smallest holes of a box grater. Be sure it's unsweetened, or the brigadeiros will be much too sweet. If you're feeling adventurous, you can also buy a fresh coconut and crack and grate it yourself. See Test Kitchen, p. 77, to learn how.

*Leticia Moreinos is a cooking teacher based in Weston, Connecticut. To get information on her classes, see page 89.* □



RED-WINE-BRAISED BRISKET WITH  
CREMINI, CARROTS, AND THYME

RIGATONI WITH  
BRISKET AND  
PORCINI RAGÙ



BRISKET AND  
ROOT VEGETABLE  
SALAD WITH  
HORSERADISH  
DRESSING





# Brisket

*the real deal*

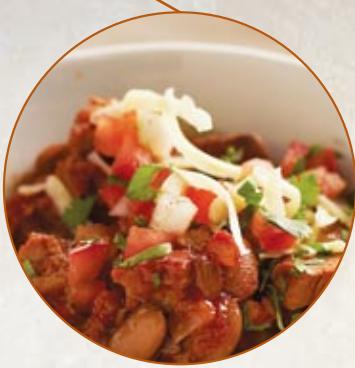
An authentic, tried-and-true recipe, plus three delicious ways to use it up. **BY JOYCE GOLDSTEIN**

IT'S A FUNNY THING ABOUT BRISKET. Because I've taught cooking for so long and have written a few Jewish cookbooks, perfect strangers find me online or in the phone book and call me at home with brisket questions. I usually get these calls at Passover, just before the first Seder. There are questions about timing, slicing, and reheating, about tenderness, fat, tomatoes or not, about how far in advance the brisket can be prepared. I don't know these callers, but because they sound so stressed, I answer their questions. The brisket doctor is in.

OK, so I'm not really a doctor. But I *have* been making brisket for many years, so I've got pretty strong opinions on how it should be made. While some cooks like to get creative with their ingredients, flavoring their brisket with anything from chili sauce to cranberry juice, I think the best brisket is cooked the way my family has always done it—with tons of onions, a little tomato, red wine, mushrooms, and carrots. It's a simple yet classic combination.

That simplicity also makes the leftovers (you'll have lots of them) easy to transform into other delicious and unexpected dishes later in the week. Combine brisket with tomatoes, beans, and spices, and you've got a rich, spicy chili; add some wine, porcini, and rigatoni, and you have a hearty pasta dish; and brisket plus root vegetables, fresh herbs, and a creamy dressing add up to a fresh spring salad—my prescription for easy weeknight meals.

BRISKET AND BEAN CHILI



## MASTER RECIPE



## red-wine-braised brisket with cremini, carrots, and thyme

To get a jump start on this recipe, you can season the brisket up to 1 day ahead.

**Serves 12 (or 4 to 6 with enough leftovers to make 2 or 3 of the recipes that follow)**

- 2 Tbs. sweet paprika
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 8½ to 9 lb. beef brisket (whole brisket or flat and/or point halves; see Test Kitchen, p. 77, for more information), untrimmed of fat
- 5 Tbs. vegetable oil
- 6 large yellow onions, diced (about 12 cups)
- 3 to 4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- 1 15-oz. can tomato purée
- 1 cup dry red wine
- 4 large sprigs fresh thyme
- 8 large carrots, cut into 2-inch pieces
- 10 oz. cremini or white button mushrooms, quartered if large, halved if small (3 cups)

**In a small bowl**, combine the paprika, 1 Tbs. salt, and 1 Tbs. pepper. Rub the mixture all over the brisket. Let rest at room temperature for two hours or cover and refrigerate overnight (bring the meat to room temperature before cooking).

**Position a rack** in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F.

**Meanwhile**, heat the oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add the onions and garlic and cook, stirring occasionally, until very soft and pale gold, 15 to 20 minutes. Transfer the onions to a large heavy-duty roasting pan

and spread them in an even layer. Set the brisket fat side up on the onions (it's OK if the pieces overlap), cover tightly with heavy-duty foil (or a double layer of regular foil), and braise in the oven for 1 hour. As the brisket cooks, it will give off quite a bit of liquid.

**Pour the tomato** purée and wine around the brisket and add the thyme sprigs. Cover and continue to braise the meat for 2½ hours.

**Add the carrots** and mushrooms and continue to braise, covered, until the meat is fork-tender, about 1 hour more.

**Transfer the meat** to a cutting board and trim the fat. If using a whole brisket or a point half, separate the two layers of meat and trim the fat. With a slotted spoon, move the vegetables to a serving bowl.

**Skim the excess fat** from the pan juices, strain 2 cups of the juices, and bring to a boil in a small saucepan over medium-high heat. Boil until reduced to about 1 cup; the sauce should be rich and flavorful. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

**Slice as much brisket** across the grain as you need for the meal and serve with the vegetables and reduced sauce. Wrap the leftover brisket, vegetables, and juices separately. Leftovers will keep in the fridge for 3 to 4 days, or in the freezer for up to 2 months.

**Serving suggestion:** Serve with potato pancakes (see FineCooking.com for a recipe) or mashed potatoes, and offer hot mustard, horseradish (or the horseradish sauce for the salad on p. 60), and applesauce at the table.

## rigatoni with brisket and porcini ragù

Though this recipe calls for dried pasta, you can also use any shape of fresh pasta. Once you've drained it, just toss it with a few tablespoons of butter to prevent it from sticking together.

**Serves 6**

- 1 oz. dried porcini mushrooms (1 cup)
- 3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 oz. pancetta, chopped (1 cup)
- 1 large celery stalk, chopped
- 1 large carrot, chopped
- 1 large yellow onion, chopped
- Kosher salt
- 3 large cloves garlic, minced
- 4 cups coarsely chopped leftover brisket (about 1 lb.; recipe opposite), plus 2 cups leftover brisket juices
- 2 cups dry red wine; more as needed
- 2 tsp. chopped fresh thyme
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 lb. dried rigatoni
- Freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano, for serving

**Soak the porcini** in 1 cup hot water for 30 minutes. Drain, straining and reserving the soaking liquid. Chop the porcini and set aside. **Heat the oil** in an 11- to 12-inch straight-sided sauté pan over medium heat. Add the pancetta, celery, carrot, onion, and 1 tsp. salt; cook, stirring often, until the vegetables are soft and lightly golden, about 15 minutes. Add the garlic and cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Add the brisket and its juices, wine, thyme, and the porcini and their soaking liquid. Bring to a simmer, reduce the heat to low, and cook until the sauce is very thick, about 30 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

**Meanwhile**, bring a large pot of well-salted water to a boil. Cook the pasta in the boiling water until al dente. Drain and toss with most of the meat sauce. Top with the remaining sauce and pass the Parmigiano at the table.



**TIP**

### no browning necessary

Some cooks brown their brisket before braising, but I don't—I've tasted it both ways and haven't noticed much of a flavor difference. Plus, without browning, the meat is more tender and easier to slice.



## brisket and root vegetable salad with creamy horseradish dressing

Meat from the flat end of the brisket is best for this dish because it holds its shape better than brisket point. (For more information, see Test Kitchen, p. 77). Leave the brisket in long slices or cut it into wide strips, and be sure it's at room temperature so it won't be too dense.

**Serves 4**

- 4 small golden or red beets (about 2½ inches wide)
- 8 small red potatoes (about 2½ inches wide)
- Kosher salt
- ½ cup sour cream
- ¼ cup drained prepared horseradish
- 1 Tbs. distilled white vinegar; more as needed
- ½ medium tart apple, peeled, cored, and minced
- 2 Tbs. minced white onion (optional)
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 medium bulb fennel, cored and very thinly sliced or shaved with a mandoline or vegetable peeler (about 2½ cups; see Test Kitchen, p. 77, for more information)
- ½ cup fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves
- 1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- 16 thin slices leftover brisket (recipe, p. 58), at room temperature

**Cut the tails** and leaves from the beets but leave about 1 inch of the stems attached. Wash well and put them in a 2-quart saucepan with enough cold water to cover. Bring to a boil over high heat, reduce the heat to medium low, and simmer until tender when pierced with a skewer, 30 to 35 minutes. Drain and rinse with cold water to cool. When cool enough to handle, slip off the peels. Slice the beets ¼ inch thick.

**While the beets cook**, put the potatoes in a 4-quart saucepan with enough water to cover and 1 Tbs. salt. Bring to a boil over high heat, reduce the heat to medium low, and simmer until the potatoes are tender when pierced with a skewer, 20 to 25 minutes. Drain and rinse with cold water to cool. When cool enough to handle, peel and slice ¼ inch thick.

**In a small bowl**, whisk the sour cream, horseradish, and vinegar. Mix in the apple and onion, if using. Season to taste with salt, pepper, and vinegar.

**In a medium bowl**, toss the fennel and parsley with 2 Tbs. of the horseradish dressing, the olive oil, ¼ tsp. salt, and a pinch of pepper.

**Arrange the brisket**, potatoes, and beets on 4 large plates. Sprinkle lightly with salt and drizzle with some of the dressing. Pile the fennel on top and serve the remaining dressing on the side.

## brisket and bean chili

Chunks of leftover brisket make this chili much more interesting than one made with ground beef. If you don't have time to cook beans, skip that step and use 3 cups drained and rinsed canned beans instead.

**Serves 4 to 6**

### FOR THE BEANS

- 1 cup dried pinto or kidney beans
- 1 large yellow onion, chopped
- 2 large cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp. dried oregano
- Kosher salt

### FOR THE CHILI

- 3 Tbs. olive oil
- 2 large yellow onions, chopped
- 4 large cloves garlic, minced
- 3 Tbs. ancho chile powder (see note)
- 1 Tbs. dried oregano
- 1 Tbs. ground cumin
- ¼ tsp. cayenne
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 28-oz. can diced tomatoes
- 1 12-oz. bottle lager beer (such as Corona)
- 1 6-oz. can tomato paste
- 1 lb. leftover brisket (recipe, p. 58), cut into ½-inch dice (about 4 cups), plus 1½ cups leftover brisket juices
- Dash balsamic or red wine vinegar (optional)

### PREPARE THE BEANS

In a medium bowl, soak the beans in enough water to cover by at least 2 inches, and refrigerate overnight.

**Drain the beans** and put them in a medium saucepan. Cover with fresh cold water by about 1 inch. Add the onion, garlic, and oregano. Bring to a boil over high heat, lower the heat to a simmer, and cook for 30 minutes. Add 1 tsp. salt and continue to simmer until tender, about 30 minutes more. Drain and set aside.

### MAKE THE CHILI

Heat the oil in a heavy-duty 6-quart pot over medium heat. Add the onions and cook, stirring occasionally, until soft and pale gold, about 15 minutes. Add the garlic, chile powder, oregano, cumin, cayenne, 1 tsp. salt, and 1 tsp. black pepper and cook for 1 to 2 minutes. Stir in the tomatoes and their juices, beer, and tomato paste.

**Add the brisket** and its juices, bring to a boil and then reduce the heat to low. Simmer, covered, until the meat is meltingly tender and the sauce is flavorful, about 30 minutes. Season to taste with salt, pepper, and vinegar, if the chili needs some acidity for balance.

**Serve the beans** on the side, or stir them into the chili and simmer for about 15 minutes before serving.

**Serving suggestion:** The garnishes are half the fun. Serve with warm corn tortillas, sour cream, sliced avocado, salsa, and minced onion and cilantro. If you're not from Texas, you may want to serve rice with the chili.

**Note:** If you can't find ground ancho chile powder, use regular chili powder instead and reduce the oregano and cumin to 1½ tsp. each. Add cayenne to taste.

*Joyce Goldstein is the former chef-owner of San Francisco's Square One restaurant. Her latest book, Tapas: Sensational Small Plates from Spain, is due out this spring. □*



# SANDWICH MEETS GRILL

Pressed for time?  
A few fresh ingredients  
plus good bread make  
a fast and easy dinner.

BY LAUREN CHATTMAN

If you think a sandwich is a step down from dinner, think again. Taking their inspiration from everyone's favorites—but taking them quite a bit further—these fast and easy recipes make the most of ingredients you likely have on hand (bacon, tuna, turkey). Add a fresh ingredient or two (spinach, tomato, mushrooms) and then cheese (mozzarella, sharp Cheddar, provolone) for the “melt” effect. In the few minutes it takes to heat up a panini press or grill pan, you're ready to go, and then dinner's just minutes from done.





Grilled Mozzarella and Spinach BLT



## grilled mozzarella and spinach blts

Creamy mozzarella is a good foil for the salty, smoky bacon in this grilled version of a BLT. Before cooking, remove any tough stems from the spinach.

**Serves 4**

- 12 slices thick-cut bacon
- 1 medium clove garlic, finely chopped
- 3 cups lightly packed baby spinach
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 8 slices country-style white bread
- 8 oz. fresh mozzarella, sliced
- 1 large tomato (about 8 oz.), cored and thinly sliced
- 1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil

**Working in batches,** cook the bacon in a 12-inch skillet over medium heat until crisp, about 8 minutes per batch. Transfer to a paper-towel-lined plate and drain off all but 1 Tbs. of the fat. Return the pan to medium heat, add the garlic, and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir in the spinach and cook until just wilted, about 30 seconds longer. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

**Heat a panini** or sandwich press according to the manufacturer's instructions. (Alternatively, heat a nonstick grill pan over medium-high heat.)

**While the press is heating**, arrange the spinach on 4 pieces of the bread. Top each with some bacon, mozzarella, and tomato, sprinkle lightly with salt, and complete each sandwich with a slice of the remaining bread. Brush both sides of the sandwiches with the oil.

**Put the sandwiches** on the press, pull the top down, and cook until browned and crisp and the cheese is melted, 3 to 6 minutes, depending on how hot your machine is. (If using a grill pan, put a heavy pan on top of the sandwiches and cook, turning the sandwiches over once.) Carefully remove from the press and serve.

## grilled portobello and goat cheese sandwiches with green olive pesto

The earthy flavor of the portobellos goes well with the mild, tangy goat cheese and salty olive pesto.

**Serves 4**

- 1 cup tightly packed fresh basil leaves
- ½ cup pitted green olives, such as manzanilla, coarsely chopped
- 1 Tbs. walnuts or pine nuts
- 1 small clove garlic, coarsely chopped
- ½ cup plus 2 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 8 small to medium portobello mushrooms, stemmed, gills removed, and wiped clean
- 4 soft round rolls, such as Portuguese or kaiser, split in half
- 4 oz. fresh goat cheese, crumbled

**Heat a panini** or sandwich press according to the manufacturer's instructions. (Alternatively, heat a nonstick grill pan over medium-high heat.)

**While the press is heating**, put the basil, olives, nuts, and garlic in a food processor and process until finely chopped. With the motor running, add 6 Tbs. of the olive oil in a slow, steady stream through the feed tube and continue to process until thick and smooth. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

**Brush the mushrooms** with 2 Tbs. of the olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Put them on the press, pull the top down, and cook until softened and browned, 3 to 5 minutes (or cook in the grill pan, flipping once). Transfer to a plate and let cool slightly. **Spread the pesto** on the bottom halves of the rolls. Put 2 mushrooms on each and then some cheese. Top the sandwiches with the other halves of the rolls. Brush both sides of the sandwiches with the remaining 2 tsp. oil.

**Put the sandwiches** on the press pesto side up, pull the top down, and cook until browned and crisp and the cheese is melted, 5 to 7 minutes, depending on how hot your machine is. (If using a grill pan, put a heavy pan on top of the sandwiches and cook, turning the sandwiches over once.) Carefully remove from the press and serve.



Grilled Portobello and Goat Cheese  
Sandwich with Green Olive Pesto



## grilled tuna and provolone sandwiches with salsa verde

For this recipe, steer clear of tuna packed in water; instead, choose good-quality tuna packed in olive oil.

**Serves 4**

- ½ cup packed fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves
- ¼ cup plus 2 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice
- 1 Tbs. capers, drained and rinsed
- 1 small clove garlic, chopped
- 1 anchovy fillet, rinsed and chopped
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 8 thin slices provolone (about 4 oz.)

**4 4-inch squares focaccia (or substitute any soft roll), split in half**

**12 oz. tuna packed in olive oil, drained well**

**Heat a panini** or sandwich press according to the manufacturer's instructions. (Alternatively, heat a nonstick grill pan over medium-high heat.)

**While the press is heating**, combine the parsley, ¼ cup of the olive oil, lemon juice, capers, garlic, anchovy, and a few grinds of pepper in a blender and blend until smooth.

**Lay the cheese** on the bottoms of the focaccia. Spoon the tuna over the cheese.

Spread some of the salsa verde over the inside tops of the focaccia and put the tops on the sandwiches salsa verde side down. Brush both sides of the sandwiches with the remaining 2 tsp. oil.

**Put the sandwiches** on the press salsa verde side up, pull the top down, and cook until browned and crisp and the cheese is melted, 5 to 7 minutes, depending on how hot your machine is. (If using a grill pan, put a heavy pan on top of the sandwiches and cook, turning the sandwiches over once.) Carefully remove from the press and serve.

## grilled turkey and cheddar sandwiches with mango chutney

Naan is slightly puffy Indian-style flatbread. Other substantial flatbreads may be substituted, but avoid super-thin tortillas and lavash, which won't be sturdy enough to contain the filling. Major Grey's chutney, available in the condiment or Indian foods section of the supermarket, adds moisture, sweetness, and spice.

**Serves 4**

### No pan, no problem

If you don't have a panini or sandwich press, you can use a nonstick grill pan or skillet. Put a heavy pan on top of the sandwiches as they cook to press them, and flip once.

- 2 cups** grated sharp Cheddar
- ¼ cup** finely chopped fresh cilantro
- ½ cup** Major Grey's mango chutney
- 4 naan breads**
- 12 oz.** sliced turkey breast
- 1 Tbs.** unsalted butter, melted
- ½ tsp.** ground cumin

**Heat a panini** or sandwich press according to the manufacturer's instructions. (Alternatively, heat a nonstick grill pan over medium-high heat.)

**While the press is heating**, combine the cheese and cilantro in a small bowl and stir until well blended. Spread the chutney on one half of each of the naan breads. Top with the turkey. Spoon the cheese mixture over the turkey. Fold the naan in half to cover the sandwich filling. Combine the melted butter and cumin; brush on both sides of the sandwiches.

**Put the sandwiches** on the press, pull the top down, and cook until browned and crisp, 3 to 6 minutes, depending on how hot your machine is. (If using a grill pan, put a heavy pan on top of the sandwiches and cook, turning the sandwiches over once.) Carefully remove from the press and serve.

*Lauren Chattman is the coauthor of Panini Express: 70 Delicious Recipes, Hot off the Press. □*





# Homemade Sausage

Embrace your inner butcher and learn how to grind, season, and stuff your own. **BY ADAM KAYE**

WHAT COULD BE MORE SATISFYING than biting into a juicy, meaty, perfectly seasoned sausage that you've made with your own two hands? The good news is that sausage-making is simple and fun. High-quality ingredients like sustainably raised meat are widely available, and online purveyors sell everything from seasonings to natural hog casings. With a little know-how and a home meat grinder and stuffer (see Test Drive, page 30), avid carnivores can make impressive butcher-shop-quality links right in their own kitchens. And we're going to show you how.



Sage and Red Wine Pork Sausage, recipe page 70



1



2



3

## sage and red wine pork sausage

For information about fat back, see Test Kitchen, p. 77; to buy a meat grinder, see Test Drive, p. 30.

**Yields about 5 lb.**

**4½ lb. boneless pork butt**

**1 lb. pork fat back**

**1 oz. kosher salt (4 Tbs. Diamond Crystal brand or 2 Tbs. Morton brand)**

**2¼ tsp. fresh finely ground black pepper**

**1½ tsp. minced garlic**

**¼ cup chopped fresh sage**

**½ cup dry red wine, such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Chianti, or Merlot**

**12 feet small hog casings (32 to 35 mm diameter), cut into three 4-foot pieces (optional); see Where to Buy It, p. 89**

### MAKE THE SAUSAGE

Trim and discard any gristle or connective tissue from the pork. Cut the pork and pork fat back into 1-inch cubes **1**. Spread in an even layer on a rimmed baking sheet and put in the freezer, uncovered, until very cold (partially frozen on the edges but still soft in the center), about 1 hour **2**. Meanwhile, chill a large mixing bowl and the blade and ¼-inch grinding plate from your meat grinder.

**Set up the meat grinder** with the chilled parts according to manufacturer's instructions. Grind the pork and the fat together into the chilled bowl. The mixture should come off the grinder cleanly, and the fat should not appear warm or smeared **3**. If smearing occurs, return the meat and fat to the freezer until very cold.

## Tricks of the trade

- Chill out.** Keep the ingredients and equipment cold at all times. Partially freeze the meat and fat before you grind and mix to avoid "smearing" through the grinder, which yields a greasy, grainy-textured sausage.

- Use your hands.** One of the many joys of sausage-making is the tactile experience of the process. Your hands make the best mixing tools, but be careful to use a light touch so you don't

- overwork or overheat the sausage mixture.

- The choice is yours.** One of the best things about this recipe is that you can shape the sausage mixture into patties, or you can stuff it into casings to make links.

- Make room.** If stuffing, set up your sausage stuffer on a countertop or table with ample space so the sausages don't slide off the counter as you stuff them.

- Stuff it.** Make sure the sausage mixture moves through the stuffer quickly enough to fill the casings firmly, but not so fast that they burst. Practice makes perfect.

- Air dry.** Let fresh sausage links rest on a wire rack in the refrigerator for 24 hours before cooking or storing to allow the flavors to develop and the casings to dry out a bit (this produces the "snap" that you get when you bite into a great sausage).



4

**In a small bowl**, mix the salt, pepper, garlic, and sage. Add the seasonings and the wine to the ground meat and mix briefly but thoroughly with your hands. Don't overmix, or the fat could begin to melt **4**.



5

**To taste for seasoning**, make a small patty of the sausage mixture and cook it in a small skillet over medium-low heat **5**. Taste and adjust the seasoning to your liking. If not shaping the sausages immediately, refrigerate until you're ready to proceed.



6

**SHAPE THE SAUSAGE:** You can make patties, links, or some of both.

**To make sausage patties**, use your hands to shape the patties about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to 3 inches in diameter and  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch thick **6**. For cooking information, see p. 75; storage, p. 73.

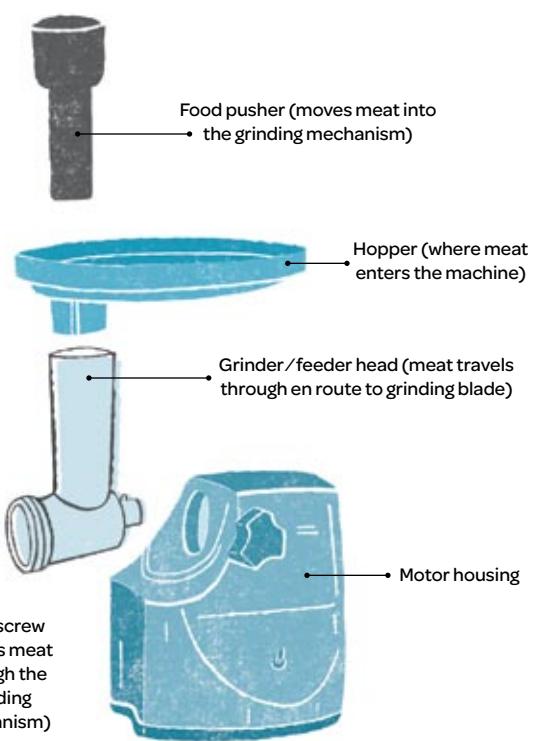
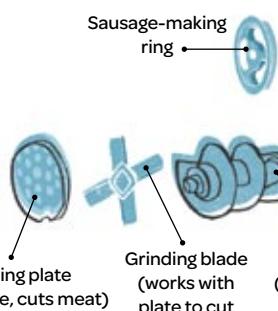
*To make links, turn the page.*

## Anatomy of an electric grinder/stuffer

This diagram will help you assemble an electric meat grinder like the one we use in this story. After grinding the meat and fat together, remove the screw ring and grinding plate and blade. Attach the sausage-making ring, the sausage-stuffing tube, and finally, the screw ring, and you're ready to stuff sausages like a pro. See Test Drive, page 30, for more on meat grinders.



Sausage-stuffing tube  
(directs sausage mixture  
into casings)





7



8



9

**To make sausage links**, put the casings in a medium bowl and set it in the sink. Rinse the casings under cool running water: Hold one end of each piece of casing open under the tap and flush it out by gently running cool water through it 7. (Once you fill part of the casing, use your hands to push the water through to other end.) Fill the bowl with fresh, cool water and let the casings soak for 10 minutes.

**Attach a  $\frac{5}{8}$ - or  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch sausage-stuffing tube** to the front of your grinder or to a sausage stuffer. (If using a grinder with a stuffing attachment, be sure to remove the grinding plate and blade first.) Splash cool water onto the tube to moisten it. Open an end of one piece of casing and pull it over the end of the tube. Push the rest of the casing onto the tube accordion-style, leaving 3 or 4 inches hanging off the end.

**Fill the hopper** with the sausage mixture and feed it through just until it reaches the end of the stuffing tube. Check with your finger to feel if the meat is flush with the opening. Tie the end of the attached casing into a knot, and slide it up over the tube until the knot hits the tip of the tube 8.

**Continue to feed** the meat mixture through the tube to fill the casing, pressing your thumb and forefinger against the tip of the tube to control the rate and tightness of the filling 9. Go slowly, don't overstuff (but do stuff firmly), and watch for air holes. When there are only 3 to 4 inches of empty casing left, stop the feeder, slip the casing off the tube and tie it in a knot about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch from the end of the sausage filling—this extra space will fill in as you make links.

## A sausage maker's tool kit



Sharp chef's knife

Mixing bowls (1 small, 1 medium, 1 large)



Cast-iron skillet



10



11



12

**Use a skewer** or toothpick to prick any air holes that have formed during stuffing 10. Repeat with the remaining casings and sausage mixture.

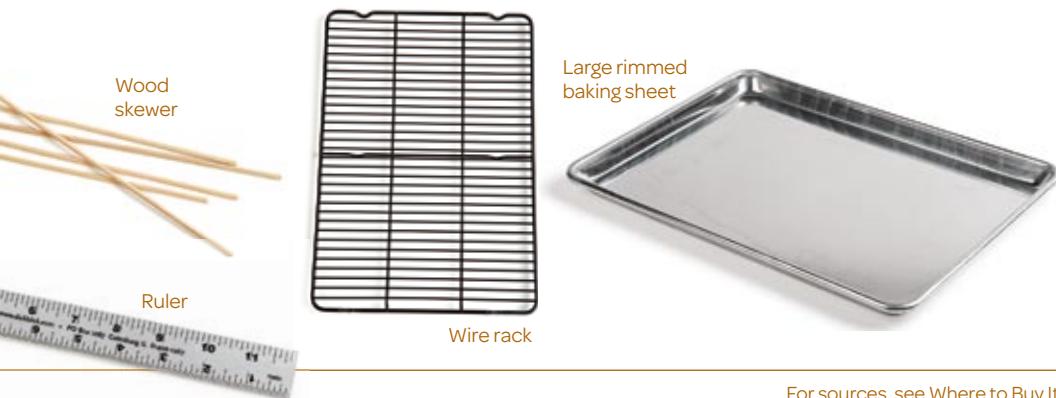
**To make links,** lay one sausage at a time on a clean work surface, with the front end of the sausage (the end where you began filling) in front of you and the rest of the sausage lying to the right. Measure 5 inches from left to right and pinch the casing at that spot between your thumb and forefinger. Twist the unlinked portion away from you at least 4 or 5 turns to bind off the link on the left. Measure another 5 inches and pinch and twist away from you to form another link. Repeat until you reach the end of the casing, always twisting in the same direction 11. Prick any remaining air holes.

**Lay the links,** uncovered, on a rack set over a rimmed baking sheet 12. Dry in the refrigerator for 24 hours to allow the flavors to meld and to give the casings a good bite when cooked. Drying will also reduce the amount of moisture in the meat, too much of which can steam and lead to bursting. For cooking information, see p. 75.

**How to store:** After drying, **sausage links** can be stored, covered, in the refrigerator for up to 2 days. Wrap **sausage patties** individually or separate them between squares of parchment or wax paper. Wrap well in plastic and refrigerate for up to 3 days. Both links and patties may be frozen for up to 3 months. Frozen sausages should be thawed overnight in the refrigerator prior to cooking.

## tip: keeping casings

- Natural sausage casings come packed in salt or covered in brine. To store leftover salt-packed casings, squeeze out as much water as possible, and when fairly dry, cover them generously with kosher salt and refrigerate—they'll last for up to a year this way.
- Brined casings will keep in their brine for up to six months in the refrigerator.
- Whatever you do, don't freeze the casings—they'll break down and tear during stuffing.



For sources, see Where to Buy It

## Variations

The basic recipe takes on new flavors with a few ingredient substitutions.



**Spicy Fennel Sausage**  
To add a bit of heat and that classic sausage flavor partner, fennel, omit the sage and add 2½ tsp. fennel seeds, lightly crushed, and 2½ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes.



**Apple and Madeira Sausage**  
For a sweet and savory combination, replace the red wine with Madeira (or another fortified wine like sherry) and add 1 cup finely chopped dried apple.



**Smoked Paprika and Thyme Sausage**  
For a warm, smoky touch, omit the sage and add 2 Tbs. chopped fresh thyme, 2 tsp. ground cumin, and 1½ tsp. pimentón (smoked paprika).



Adam Kaye is chef and kitchen director at Blue Hill at Stone Barns in Pocantico Hills, New York, where he makes sausages every day. □



**To sauté sausages,** heat 2 tsp. oil in a large, preferably cast-iron, skillet over medium heat. Cook, turning as needed, until browned and cooked through, about 8 minutes for patties and 12 minutes for links.



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# TEST KITCHEN

*Tips/Techniques/Equipment/Ingredients/Glossary*



To crack a coconut, you'll need a few tools that aren't usually found in the kitchen. To learn more, turn to page 80.



## INGREDIENT

### Why Parmigiano-Reggiano?

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED what distinguishes Parmigiano-Reggiano from Parmesan cheese? Genuine Parmigiano-Reggiano is made only in the Emilia-Romagna region of northern Italy, following stringent guidelines. The milk used to make the cheese comes from cows that spend most of their days grazing in grassy meadows. The farmers pay special attention to their animals, knowing that their reward will be a truly unique cheese, with an unrivaled texture and nutty taste. Each wheel is aged for at least 12 months before the Parmigiano-Reggiano stamp is imprinted on its rind and it's ready for the market.

Parmigiano-Reggiano is one of the most copied cheeses on the market, its imitators being Parmesan cheeses. These cheeses tend to be salt laden and mass produced from the milk of penned-in, grain-

fed cows. There are no guidelines or rules to guarantee quality, and the cheese is often sold already grated or shredded.

Because Parmigiano-Reggiano is far superior, we make a point of calling for the genuine item in our recipes. We also recommend that you purchase a chunk of the cheese and grate it freshly yourself, rather than buying it already grated. When you buy pre-grated cheese, you have no way of knowing how long ago it was grated, and as the grated cheese sits, it loses moisture and flavor, eventually tasting more like sawdust than cheese. Grating the cheese yourself is well worth the small effort—the cheese will have more flavor and nuance, and your food will taste better for it.

—Melissa Pellegrino

## GLOSSARY

### How to Buy a Chicken

If you want the best-tasting, most humanely raised chicken with no unnatural additives, look for one or more of these labels on the wrapping:

#### Best bet

**USDA Organic Certified** The official organic seal means the chicken was raised under a specific set of humane guidelines, including requirements for shelter and an organic diet without antibiotics or synthetic pesticides.

#### Next best

**No Antibiotics Used** These chickens are not necessarily organic, but they have been raised without antibiotics of any kind.

**Certified Humane** Chickens with the Humane Farm Animal Care seal meet requirements for humane treatment, which include access to clean water, no antibiotics, and no cages.

**Pastured Poultry or "Grass-Ranged" Poultry** This term is most often used to label chickens that have been raised on small farms in uncrowded conditions and been allowed to feed on grass in addition to grain.

#### Keep an eye out for

**Air-Chilled** Most chickens are chilled in water, but a new process called air-chilling prevents them from absorbing excess water, which can mean a tastier, crispier bird. There are brands that are both air-chilled and certified organic.

**Kosher** Kosher chickens are slaughtered according to Jewish dietary laws. The process includes brining the chicken in a salt solution, which not only removes any remaining blood and bacteria but enhances flavor as well. There are brands that are both kosher and organic.

#### Don't be fooled by

**100 % Natural** This means nothing. Many of these birds are injected with saline solution to add weight. They may also contain "natural" additives, such as carrageenan, broth, tenderizers, or marinades.

**Hormone-Free** All chickens are hormone-free because the use of hormones in poultry is prohibited by law.

**Cage-Free** The birds may still be tightly packed into sheds without room to move, access to the outdoors, or clean surroundings.

**Free-Range** This popular label does not mean much other than the birds are "allowed" to wander outside the barn for a few short weeks of their lives.

—Susie Middleton

**TECHNIQUE**

## How to carve a roast chicken

There's more than one way to carve a roast chicken, but this technique is our favorite because it gives you boneless breast meat that you can slice across the grain, if you like.

**1 FIRST THE LEGS**

Forcefully bend a leg away from the body until the joint pops apart.



Use a sharp boning knife to sever the leg from the body, cutting through the joint. As you separate the leg, be sure to get the "oyster," a tasty nugget of meat toward the back of the chicken just above the thigh.



Separate the drumstick from the thigh by cutting through the joint. It should be fairly easy to cut through—if the knife meets resistance, reposition it slightly and try again.

**4 THEN THE BREAST**

Begin separating one side of the breast from the body by cutting along the breastbone with the tip of your boning knife.



When you reach the wishbone, angle the knife and cut down along the wishbone. Then cut down through the wing joint. Finish separating the breast by pulling back on the meat and using little flicks of the knife tip to cut the meat away.



Cut the wings from the breast. Trim off the wing tips, if you like. Slice the breast crosswise, in half, or in thin slices.

—Jennifer Armentrout

**TECHNIQUE**

## Cracking a coconut

IF YOUR SUPERMARKET is anything like ours, the baking aisle offers lots of choices for sweetened shredded coconut. Unsweetened coconut, which you'll need if you're making the Coconut Brigadeiros on page 55, is harder to find—check health food stores, or consider starting with a fresh coconut from the produce section.

It does take more effort to crack and grate a coconut yourself, but you will be rewarded with great flavor. Choose one that's heavy for its size. Its three eyes should be dry, and it should slosh when shaken. Avoid coconuts that are gray in color or that show wet staining, a sign that the shell is deeply cracked. A cracked outer shell is fine as long as the coconut sloshes and doesn't look wet. To get cracking, follow the steps at right.



**1**  
With a Phillips screwdriver, probe the eyes until you find the one that yields easily. Push the screwdriver into this eye until you reach the liquid. Then pull it out and shake the coconut juice into a cup. You can drink the juice or discard it.



**2**  
Wrap the coconut in a kitchen towel, set it on a sturdy surface, and bash it with a hammer until it cracks into several pieces.



**3**  
With a regular screwdriver or an oyster knife, pry the coconut meat from the shells. If any pieces resist, bake them at 350°F for 10 to 15 minutes; they should then separate easily.



**4**  
With a vegetable peeler, remove the brown skin from each piece of coconut. Now you're ready to grate the coconut. Use a box grater if you're up for a little arm workout, or a food processor if not.

—Jennifer Armentrout

**TIPS**

### How to toast and store coconut

Spread grated coconut on a baking sheet and toast in a 350°F oven until it's a rich golden-brown, 5 to 10 minutes. Stir every few minutes so the coconut toasts evenly, and watch carefully, as it can go from toasted to burnt very quickly. Cool on the baking sheet before using.

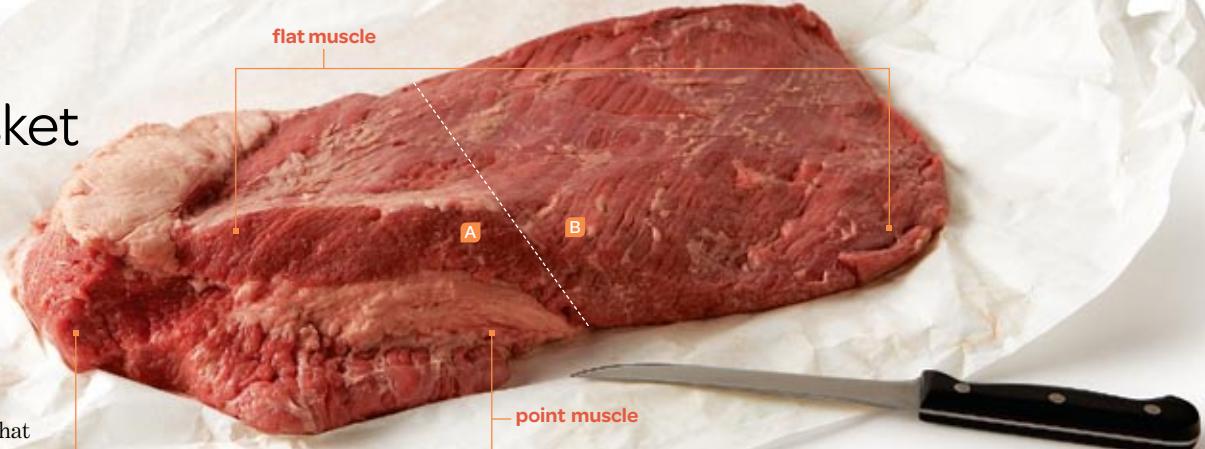
Grated coconut keeps in the refrigerator for about one week, or in the freezer for about three months.

**INGREDIENT**

## The whole brisket

WEIGHING IN AT ANYWHERE from 8 to 16 pounds, a whole brisket is a jumbo cut of meat. Brisket, which comes from the breast of the cow, comprises two distinct muscles: the flat muscle and the point muscle. The **flat muscle**, as its name implies, is flat, wide, and fairly lean; it tapers at one end. At that tapered end, separated by a thick layer of fat, the flat overlaps the smaller, fatter **point muscle**.

Unless you live in Texas barbecue country, where brisket is the meat of choice for slow-smoking, you're not likely to find a whole one in the meat case. Instead, you'll see brisket halves. The *point half* A (also known as the second cut, point cut, nose cut, front cut, or thick cut) includes the point muscle connected to the tapered end of the flat muscle by the layer of fat. The *flat half* B (also known as the first cut, flat cut, or thin



cut) is the wider side of the brisket flat—it doesn't include any of the point.

After cooking, the flat half holds together in neat slices, whereas the point half tends to shred. For our Braised Beef Brisket recipe on page 58, you can use two flats or two points, or one of each. And if a small whole brisket happens to be available (or you feel like special-ordering one), you could use that, too.

When deciding how much to buy, keep in mind that brisket exudes a lot of juice during cooking and may weigh 40 to 60 percent

less by the time it's done. We found, for example, that our brisket recipe yielded about 5¼ pounds of cooked meat from 9 pounds of raw brisket flat halves. To offset the moisture loss, it's important to choose briskets that aren't trimmed of too much fat and that have nice marbling (intramuscular fat). The fat bastes the meat as it cooks and enhances the flavor, and then you can trim it away before eating.

—Jennifer Armentrout  
and Melissa Pellegrino

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## GLOSSARY

### Fat Back vs. Salt Pork

Fat back and salt pork look enough alike that they're sometimes confused, but they can't be used interchangeably.

**SALT PORK** is salt-cured fat from the belly and sides of the pig. It's mainly used in small amounts as a flavoring in dishes like Boston baked beans and fish chowder. The degree of saltiness varies, and it sometimes has to be blanched to remove some of the salt. Salt pork keeps for up to one month tightly wrapped in the refrigerator.

**FAT BACK** is a fresh, unsmoked, and unsalted layer of fat from a pig's back. It's used in a variety of ways. Thin sheets of fat back are used to line terrines and to wrap lean cuts of meat like pork loin roasts. It's also used to make lard, cracklings, pâtés, and all kinds of fresh sausages, like the Sage and Red Wine Sausage on page 70. Fat back keeps for up to one week tightly wrapped in the refrigerator or two months in the freezer.

—Melissa Pellegrino



## EQUIPMENT

### Two tools for shaving fennel

RAW FENNEL ADDS GREAT FLAVOR TO SALADS like the Brisket and Root Vegetable Salad on page 60, but if it's too thickly sliced, it can be fibrous and tough to eat. By shaving fennel into very thin slices, you can showcase its best attributes—a mild licorice-like flavor and crisp texture. Fortunately, you don't need perfect knife skills to produce thin slices of fennel. The mandoline (or hand slicer) and the vegetable peeler can do it for you.

#### ◀ Mandoline or hand slicer

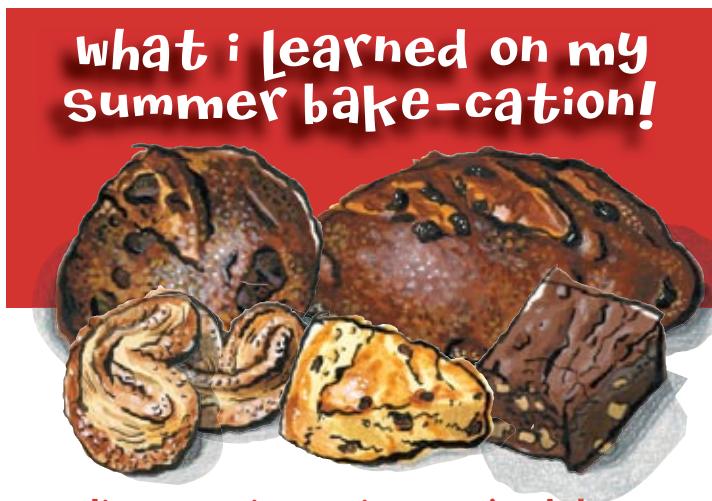
Choose the thinness of the fennel shavings by adjusting the blade of the mandoline or hand slicer. Trim the base of the fennel bulb and then halve and core it. Position one fennel half base side down on the mandoline or slicer. Using a fluid motion, slide the fennel back and forth across the blade, allowing the shavings to fall on the cutting board. Keep going until the fennel becomes difficult to hold.

#### Vegetable peeler ▶

Trim the base of the fennel and cut the bulb into quarters. Remove the core from each quarter. Holding a fennel quarter in one hand, run the peeler lengthwise down a cut side of the quarter. Continue to shave the bulb in this manner until it becomes difficult to hold.

—Melissa Pellegrino





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## thai-style stir-fried chicken and basil

If you like, use a mix of fresh cilantro and mint instead of basil. Serve over cooked jasmine rice.

**Serves 2 to 3**

- 2 Tbs. vegetable oil
- 4 medium shallots, peeled and thinly sliced
- 2 medium cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- ¼ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 lb. chicken breast cutlets (about ¼ inch thick), cut crosswise into 1-inch-wide strips
- 1 Tbs. fish sauce
- 1 Tbs. fresh lime juice
- 2 tsp. packed light brown sugar
- 1 cup lightly packed fresh basil leaves

**Heat the oil** in a well-seasoned wok or a heavy-duty 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering hot. Add the shallots, garlic, and red pepper flakes; cook, stirring frequently, until the shallots start to soften but not brown, 1 to 2 minutes. Add the chicken and cook, stirring, until it's no longer pink and the shallots are beginning to brown, 2 to 3 minutes.

**Add the fish sauce**, lime juice, sugar, and ¼ cup water. Cook, stirring frequently, until the chicken is just cooked through and the liquid reduces to a saucy consistency, 2 to 3 minutes. (If the sauce reduces before the chicken is cooked through, add water, 1 Tbs. at a time.) Remove from the heat, add the basil, and stir to wilt it. —*Lori Longbotham*



## quick beef enchiladas with salsa verde

An easy, homemade salsa verde adds a tangy kick to these hearty enchiladas.

**Serves 4**

### Kosher salt

- 1 lb. tomatillos (about 15 medium), husked and rinsed
- 3 jalapeños, stemmed and halved lengthwise (seeded, if you like)
- 1 large yellow onion, half cut into 4 wedges, half chopped
- ¾ cup roughly chopped fresh cilantro
- 1½ Tbs. canola oil
- 1 lb. lean ground beef
- 2 tsp. ground cumin
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 8 6-inch corn tortillas
- 1½ cups shredded Monterey Jack cheese

**Bring a medium pot** of salted water to a boil. Add the tomatillos, jalapeños, and onion wedges; cover and simmer until tender, about 10 minutes. Drain well and transfer to a blender along with ½ cup of the cilantro. Purée until just slightly chunky and season to taste with salt.

**Meanwhile**, heat 1 Tbs. of the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the beef, chopped onion, cumin, 1 tsp. salt, and ¼ tsp. pepper and cook, stirring occasionally to break up the meat, until cooked through, about 5 minutes. Stir ½ cup of the salsa verde into the beef.

**Position a rack** about 6 inches from the broiler and heat the broiler to high. Grease a 9x13-inch metal or ceramic baking dish with the remaining ½ Tbs. oil.

**Wrap the tortillas** in a few slightly damp paper towels and microwave on high until warm, 30 to 45 seconds. Working with one tortilla at a time, spoon some of the beef mixture down

*Continued on page 86*



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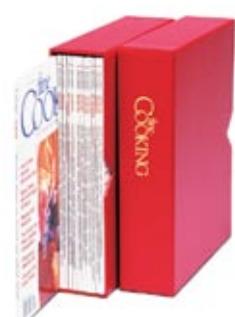
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the center of the tortilla and sprinkle with 1 Tbs. of the cheese. Roll up snugly and transfer to the prepared baking dish, seam side down. Repeat with the remaining tortillas and beef mixture. Pour the remaining salsa verde over the enchiladas and sprinkle with the remaining cheese. Broil until golden brown and bubbly, 3 to 5 minutes. Garnish with the remaining cilantro and serve. —Liz Pearson



## open-face brie, apple, and arugula sandwiches

A cup of hot soup turns this sandwich into a satisfying meal.

**Serves 4**

- 8 slices rustic artisan bread (about 2½ by 6 inches and ¾ inch thick)
- 8 tsp. Dijon mustard
- 4 cups packed baby arugula
- 1 medium Fuji apple, cored and thinly sliced
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 8 oz. Brie, thinly sliced

**Position a rack** 6 inches from the broiler and heat the broiler to high.

**Put the bread** slices on a rimmed baking sheet and set under the broiler. Broil until nicely toasted, 1 to 2 minutes.

**Remove the pan** from the oven, flip the bread over, and spread 1 tsp. of the mustard evenly on each untoasted side. Top with the arugula and then the apple slices. Season lightly with salt and pepper, and then arrange the Brie slices in a single layer over the apples.

**Broil just until** the Brie starts to melt, 1 to 2 minutes (don't let it melt too much or the apple will get warm and the arugula will wilt). Sprinkle with a little black pepper.

—Dabney Gough



## minestrone with green beans and fennel

For a vegetarian version of this recipe, use vegetable broth—preferably homemade.

**Yields about 8 cups; serves 4 to 6**

- 3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 medium cloves garlic, smashed
- ½ lb. green beans, trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 small fennel bulb, quartered, cored, and cut into ¼-inch dice
- Kosher salt
- 1 quart lower-salt chicken broth
- 1 14½-oz. can diced tomatoes
- 1 15½-oz. can cannellini beans, rinsed and drained
- ½ cup dried ditalini pasta or small elbows
- ½ cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano; more for sprinkling
- 6 large fresh basil leaves, coarsely chopped
- Freshly ground black pepper

**Heat the oil** and garlic in a medium saucepan over medium heat until the garlic begins to brown, 2 to 3 minutes; discard the garlic. Raise the heat to medium high, add the green beans, fennel, and ¾ tsp. salt, and cook, stirring, until the beans and fennel begin to soften and brown in places, 5 to 7 minutes. Add the broth and the tomatoes with their juices and bring to a boil. Add the cannellini beans and pasta and return to a boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer, cover, and cook until the pasta and green beans are completely tender, 10 to 12 minutes.

**Stir in the cheese** and basil and season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve sprinkled with additional cheese.

—Tony Rosenfeld

## pan-seared salmon with spinach and shiitake

Be sure to ask your fishmonger to scale the salmon.

**Serves 4**

- 3½ Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 medium shallots, finely chopped
- ½ lb. shiitake mushrooms, stemmed and sliced ¼ inch thick
- ½ cup heavy cream
- 1 tsp. chopped fresh thyme
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 cups lightly packed baby spinach leaves
- 4 6-oz. boneless, skin-on salmon fillets
- 3 Tbs. fresh lemon juice

**Heat 2 Tbs.** of the oil in a 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add the shallots and cook, stirring often, until golden brown, about 2 minutes. Add the mushrooms and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, 3 to 4 minutes. Stir in the cream, thyme, 1 tsp. salt, and ½ tsp. pepper. Reduce the heat to medium and cook, stirring often, until thickened, 1 to 2 minutes. Remove the skillet from the heat and stir in the spinach until wilted.

Transfer to a bowl and cover with foil to keep warm. Clean the skillet and return it to the stove.

**Heat the remaining 1½ Tbs.** oil in the skillet over medium heat. Season the salmon fillets all over with 1 tsp. salt and ¼ tsp. pepper. Arrange the salmon in the skillet skin side up in a single layer and cook, turning once, until golden brown and just cooked through, 7 to 9 minutes total. Transfer the salmon to a large plate.

**Mix the lemon juice** with 1 Tbs. water, add to the skillet, and cook, scraping up any browned bits, until just thickened, about 30 seconds. Drizzle the pan juices over the salmon and serve with the warm shiitake mixture.

—Liz Pearson





## pecan-crusted skirt steak

This main course is just right with coleslaw, or steamed broccoli served with a few lemon wedges on the side.

**Serves 4**

- ½ Tbs. olive oil
- 1½ lb. skirt steak, trimmed
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- ¾ cup pecan pieces
- 2 Tbs. cold butter, cut into small pieces
- 2 tsp. honey
- 1½ tsp. roughly chopped fresh rosemary

**Position an oven rack** about 6 inches from the broiler and heat the broiler on high.

**Line a large** rimmed baking sheet with foil and grease the foil with the oil. If necessary, cut the steak crosswise into pieces 8 to 10 inches long. Arrange the steak on the baking sheet in a single layer and season with 1 tsp. salt and ¼ tsp. pepper. Put the pecans, butter, honey, rosemary, 1 tsp. salt, and ¼ tsp. pepper in a food processor and pulse until well combined and the pecans are finely chopped.



**Broil the steak** until lightly browned, 3 to 4 minutes. Flip it and broil until it's cooked nearly to your liking, about 3 minutes more for medium rare. Spread the pecan mixture over the steak, patting the mixture with the back of a spoon to help it adhere. Continue broiling until the pecan coating is toasted and fragrant, 1 to 2 minutes. Set the steak aside to rest for 5 minutes.

**Thinly slice** the steak against the grain and transfer to plates. If the pecan coating falls off the steak as you're slicing it, spoon it over the top.

—Liz Pearson

Food styling, this page, by Heidi Johannsen Stewart

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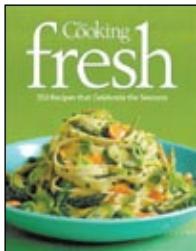
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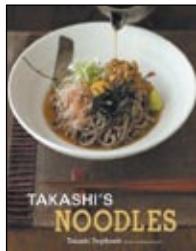
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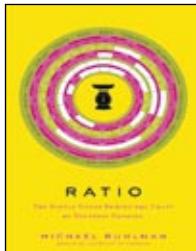
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# NUTRITION

Recipe	Calories (kcal)	Fat Cal (kcal)	Protein (g)	Carb (g)	Total Fat (g)	Sat Fat (g)	Mono Fat (g)	Poly Fat (g)	Chol (mg)	Sodium (g)	Fiber (g)
<b>LETTER FROM THE EDITOR, p. 6</b>											
Spring Vegetable Ragout with Fresh Pasta	390	120	12	55	14	8	3	1.5	95	460	6
<b>LEMONGRASS, p. 15</b>											
Spicy Mussels with Lemongrass, Chile, and Basil	240	80	29	11	9	1.5	3	3	65	670	0
<b>MUSHROOMS, p. 19</b>											
Twice-Marinated Mushrooms (per ¼ cup)	200	180	2	3	20	3	15	2	0	75	1
<b>SUN-DRIED TOMATOES, p. 20</b>											
Sun-Dried Tomato and Feta Vinaigrette (per 1 Tbs.)	70	60	0	1	7	1	4.5	1.5	0	70	0
Rigatoni with Sun-Dried Tomato and Fennel Sauce	760	300	19	94	33	16	13	2.5	80	720	6
Chicken Breasts Stuffed with Sun-Dried Tomatoes	550	280	60	5	31	7	17	5	165	570	1
<b>ROAST CHICKEN, p. 24</b>											
Best-Ever Roast Chicken (with skin)	560	310	56	0	35	9	15	7	180	450	0
<b>MINI PIZZAS, p. 28</b>											
Mini Pizzas with Arugula, Peppers, Prosciutto (per pizza)	140	45	6	16	5	2	2	0.5	10	360	2
<b>BRUNCH, p. 34</b>											
Citrus Tea Punch (per 8 oz.)	240	0	0	46	0	0	0	0	0	5	1
Peas and Carrots with Lemon, Dill, and Mint	180	120	2	14	14	2	10	1.5	0	150	4
Smoked Salmon, Goat Cheese, and Artichoke Quiche	590	400	16	33	44	27	12	2.5	230	740	3
Wild Blueberry and Ricotta Pancakes (per pancake)	110	20	5	16	2	1	0.5	0	40	190	1
<b>MINT, p. 42</b>											
Derby Day Mint Julep Cocktail	160	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Israeli Couscous Salad with Mint, Cucumber, and Feta	260	130	8	25	15	5	8	1	20	520	2
Poached Flounder with Mint Beurre Blanc	290	140	29	3	16	9	4	1.5	120	200	0
Roast Rack of Lamb with Lemon-Mint Salsa Verde	440	320	25	2	36	12	19	3	100	360	1
White Bean Salad with Mint and Red Onion	160	60	7	21	7	1	5	1	0	530	7
Strawberry-Mint Shortcakes	360	130	6	51	15	10	2.5	0.5	45	410	2
<b>BRIGADEIROS, p. 50</b>											
Chocolate Brigadeiros (per piece)	50	20	1	8	2.5	1.5	0.5	0	5	15	0
Coconut Brigadeiros (per piece)	50	30	1	6	3.5	2.5	0	0	5	10	0
Pistachio Brigadeiros (per piece)	70	35	1	7	3.5	2	1.5	0	10	15	0
<b>BRISKET, p. 56</b>											
Red-Wine-Braised Brisket with Cremini and Carrots	440	140	53	17	15	4	6	3	90	540	4
Brisket and Bean Chili	460	140	35	45	16	3	8	2.5	40	1240	12
Brisket and Vegetable Salad with Horseradish Dressing	640	180	43	72	20	7	8	3	70	1160	10
Rigatoni with Brisket and Porcini Ragù	700	190	39	68	22	5	11	3.5	55	1040	6
<b>GRILLED SANDWICHES, p. 62</b>											
Grilled Tuna and Provolone Sandwiches with Salsa Verde	650	350	42	34	39	13	18	4.5	65	1250	1
Grilled Mozzarella and Spinach BLTs	570	260	29	46	29	12	11	2	70	1510	5
Grilled Turkey and Cheddar Sandwiches with Chutney	660	240	36	67	27	15	6	1	105	1890	4
Grilled Portobello and Goat Cheese Sandwiches	590	370	15	40	42	9	26	6	15	1010	4
<b>SAUSAGE, p. 68</b>											
Sage and Red Wine Pork Sausage (per ¼ lb.)	350	250	21	1	28	10	13	3	75	630	0
Spicy Fennel Pork Sausage (per ¼ lb.)	350	250	21	1	28	10	13	3.5	75	630	0
Smoked Paprika and Thyme Pork Sausage (per ¼ lb.)	350	250	21	1	28	10	13	3.5	75	630	0
Apple and Madeira Pork Sausage (per ¼ lb.)	360	250	21	4	28	10	13	3	75	630	1
<b>MAKE IT TONIGHT, p. 84</b>											
Thai-Style Stir-Fried Chicken and Basil	280	110	32	8	13	2	5	5	85	540	0
Mинestrone with Green Beans and Fennel	220	80	10	27	9	1.5	5	1.5	0	510	6
Pan-Seared Salmon with Spinach and Shiitake	530	320	41	13	35	10	16	7	150	680	2
Quick Beef Enchiladas with Salsa Verde	580	280	36	40	31	12	12	3.5	110	790	6
Open-Face Brie, Apple, and Arugula Sandwiches	380	160	17	37	18	10	4.5	0.5	55	1300	3
Pecan-Crusted Skirt Steak	510	350	36	6	39	11	20	6	100	680	2

The nutritional analyses have been calculated by a registered dietitian at Nutritional Solutions in Melville, New York. When a recipe gives a choice of ingredients, the first choice is the one used. Optional ingre-

dients with measured amounts are included; ingredients without specific quantities are not. Analyses are per serving; when a range of ingredient amounts or servings is given, the smaller amount or portion

is used. When the quantities of salt and pepper aren't specified, the analysis is based on ¼ tsp. salt and ½ tsp. pepper per serving for entrées, and ½ tsp. salt and ¼ tsp. pepper per serving for side dishes.



# MENUS



## pronto italiano

Minestrone with Green Beans and Fennel

**page 86**

Grilled Mozzarella and Spinach BLTs

**page 64**

To drink:

*Sangiovese or Sauvignon Blanc*

Vanilla Ice Cream with Espresso-Caramel Sauce

**FineCooking.com**

## anytime thai

Spicy Steamed Mussels with Lemongrass, Chile, and Basil

**page 16**

Steamed Rice

Spicy Slaw with Radicchio and Green Mango

**FineCooking.com**

To drink:

*India pale ale or white ale*



## friends' night

Brisket and Bean Chili

**page 61**

Tex-Mex Cornbread with Cheese & Green Chiles

**FineCooking.com**

To drink: *amber lager or dry stout*



## passover supper

Red-Wine-Braised Brisket with Cremini, Carrots, and Thyme

**page 58**

Crispy Potato Pancakes

**FineCooking.com**

To drink: *kosher Syrah or Shiraz*

Flourless Chocolate-Almond Cake with Almond-Cherry-Caramel Glaze

**FineCooking.com**

## chicken dinner

Best-Ever Roast Chicken

**page 25**

White Bean Salad with Mint and Red Onion

**page 47**

To drink: *Chardonnay or Riesling*

Strawberry-Mint Shortcakes

**page 48**



## mother's day breakfast

Wild Blueberry and Ricotta Pancakes

**page 40**

Apple and Madeira Pork Sausage

**page 74**

Melons with Ginger Syrup

**FineCooking.com**



## easter feast

Roast Rack of Lamb with Lemon-Mint Salsa Verde

**page 47**

Mashed Potatoes with Caramelized Shallots

**FineCooking.com**

Mixed Greens Dressed with Sun-Dried Tomato and Feta Vinaigrette

**page 20**

To drink: *Zinfandel or Shiraz*

Classic Carrot Layer Cake with Vanilla Cream Cheese Frosting

**FineCooking.com**



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- Derby Day Mint Julep Cocktail ..... 48

**VEGETARIAN:** May contain eggs and dairy ingredients

**MAKE AHEAD:** Can be completely prepared ahead (may need reheating and a garnish to serve)

**QUICK:** Under 30 minutes



FOOD FOR THOUGHT



**the dish**  
**Name:** Adam Smith  
**Age:** 40-something  
**Job:** Newsstand owner, chocolate fiend  
**Started:** 1999  
**Where:** San Francisco  
**Known for:** Defending milk chocolate  
**Find out more:** [fogcitynews.com](http://fogcitynews.com)

## Adam Smith

Spreading the chocolate word, with a side of news.

BY LISA WADDLE

**Fine Cooking:** So you sell magazines and you sell chocolate, all in the same 1,000 square feet. Why?

**Smith:** Chocolate was never part of the equation. I set out to open the best newsstand on Market Street, with the usual candy by the cash register. Soon, my customers were asking why they could buy a French magazine but no French chocolate.

**FC:** How do you feel about mass-market chocolate?

**Smith:** I grew up eating the usual candy bars, like most Americans. The thing is, most of that is just chocolate-flavored sugar. I learned quickly that sweetness isn't the same thing as flavor. Once the light bulb came on, there was no going back.

**FC:** How did that candy epiphany change your business?

**Smith:** I became passionate about trying to sell only the best chocolate I could find and squeezing it in alongside the magazines. I started tasting everything I came across. And I still do; I taste every day.

**FC:** How do you keep it all straight?

**Smith:** We have a computer database with tasting notes on more than 2,000 chocolate bars.

**FC:** I take it your notes go beyond "yummy" or "yech."

**Smith:** You'd be surprised what you can taste: black cherry, vanilla bean, whipped cream, peach, licorice, wheat toast, dill; then there's an aftertaste of vanilla, cream cheese, buttermilk pancake, and clove—all that from Scharffen Berger's 70 Percent Cacao Bar.

**FC:** Say that again?

**Smith:** Really. We take three to seven minutes to taste a single piece.

**FC:** So out of the 225 different chocolate bars on your shelves, what's the best?

**Smith:** We don't use words like "best" or "worst." It's about flavor. We judge chocolate based on four flavor criteria: complexity, balance, length, and accuracy.

**FC:** Do you expect new employees to have chocolate "expertise"?

**Smith:** No. When they're first hired, new staffers think we have the greatest employee benefit—weekly chocolate tastings. Later, they curse me, because I've ruined them for the usual stuff.

**FC:** And your customers, can they keep up?

**Smith:** We have a frequent-buyer card, but it's not just "Buy 10 bars and get one free." It's buy 10 *different* bars. That way, they become experienced tasters, too.

**FC:** Some bars cost \$13. Do customers balk at the prices?

**Smith:** We have two answers: Taste it and you'll see why, and Aren't you worth it?

**FC:** Do you ever get tired of chocolate?

**Smith:** Not at all. I have stashes of it at home and eat chocolate even when I'm not at work. It's a lifestyle.

**FC:** Anyone ever call you a chocolate snob?

**Smith:** Not to my face.



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is knowing the perfect pairing

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